

00107710



Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 31 October, 2019

THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA

PREPARED IN THE HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE GREAT GENERAL STAFF, BERLIN.

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION BY

COLONEL W. H. H. WATERS, R.A., C.V.O.,

LATE MILITARY ATTACHÉ TO HIS MAJESTY'S EMBASSY AT BERLIN.

107710

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

LIB
OF
BO
BR
OF
ROYAL ASIA

Lx. K. 26.

GOO
968.048
Wat/War
107710

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1904.

PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE essential object of this work is the instruction of the German officer, and the criticisms which it contains point out, therefore, not only our alleged faults and errors, but show also what, in the opinion of the Great General Staff at Berlin, we ought to have done. This celebrated branch of the German army had access to various sources of information both during and after the war which were closed to us, and the work may best be left to speak for itself.

Germany is not the only Great Power which has a fully-equipped Military History section, but hers is, perhaps, better known by name in England than the corresponding branches in other armies, and it is readily admitted that in accomplishing any task which they have set themselves, the Germans are, at any rate, thorough and systematic.

The principles underlying the German military system are very simple. In Germany a Minister of War—there is more than one—is the great administrative military official; he has nothing to do with the Chief of the Great General Staff—of which there is only one—who, when grand manœuvres take place, or war is declared, is the great executive officer, with whose decisions the Minister of War has nothing to do; neither of these two officers again have anything to do with the Chief of the Military Cabinet, whose department settles questions concerning commands and promotion. All three are of equal standing under the Sovereign; each has his own well-

defined sphere for which he really is responsible, and there is, therefore, no clashing of duties. It is not suggested that one branch knows nothing about the others, but the system is clearly laid down with the result that continuity prevails in general military policy and training.

There have already been enough and more than enough books about the Boer War published in England—good, bad, and indifferent; but it is believed that not only experts, but also the general public will welcome this history which, by its conciseness, its strict impartiality, and its lucidity can hardly fail to interest and instruct all who have studied the subject of the War in South Africa.

The German edition of this book is published in pamphlets, a method which is in very general use in Germany, but does not quite fit in with our practice. It is hoped, however, to issue later an English translation of other works on the same subject upon which the General Staff is now engaged.

W. H. H. WATERS.

February, 1904.

PREFACE.

THE works issued by the Military History section of the Great General Staff have dealt hitherto chiefly with events in which the German army took part, but the attempt will now be made to utilise the experience which some other Powers have gained in wars carried on beyond the confines of Europe. The General Staff, however, has no intention of giving a complete account of such campaigns; this task must be reserved for the armies concerned at some later period, when all the official materials can be made use of. Certain phases of especial military interest will alone be treated in this work.

Nevertheless every endeavour will be made to represent as faithfully as possible, having regard to the information now available, the events which are described, and to contrast the conditions under which they occurred with those which would prevail in a European theatre of war. Now that Germany has also become a colonial Power, it seems not unimportant to draw attention to non-European wars, in order to sift and adapt the experiences gained by other armies. The significance which pertains to the South African campaign, by reason of its having been the first in which the effect of small-calibre rifles with smokeless powder was observed on a large scale, is quite sufficient justification for placing it at the head of the list.

The General Staff expresses its thanks for the valuable assistance received from various combatants in the compilation of this account.

CONTENTS.

(PART I.)

COLENSO AND MAGERSFONTEIN.

CHAPTER — PAGE

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS 1
Mobilisation.

II. THE THEATRE OF WAR AND THE BOER FORCES . . 5
Climatic Influences—Roads and Railways—The Boers as Fighting Men—Conditions of Service—Laing's Nek—Majuba Hill—State of Armament—Boer Armament.

III. TACTICS, ARMAMENT, AND EQUIPMENT OF THE BRITISH ARMY 23
Training of the British Army—Infantry Tactics—Mounted Troops and Artillery—Equipment.

IV. THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES 32
Boer Plan of Campaign—Elandslaagte—Retreat of British—Boers Invest Ladysmith.

V. EVENTS IN NATAL UP TO DECEMBER 5 . . . 43
Buller Goes to Natal—British and Boer Forces.

VI. EVENTS IN NATAL FROM DECEMBER 5 UNTIL THE BATTLE OF COLENSO 48
British Reconnaissance—Buller's Plan—Orders for Attack.

VII. THE BATTLE OF COLENSO 57
Botha's Orders—Long's Guns—Buller and the Guns—Hlangwane Hill—British Retreat—British and Boer Losses.

VIII. COMMENTS ON THE BATTLE OF COLENSO . . . 71
Buller's Dejection—Reconnaissance—Hildyard's Tactics.

IX. OPERATIONS OF LORD METHUEN UP TO DECEMBER 8 . 78
Want of Maps—Belmont—Modder River Action—Paucity of Mounted Troops.

X. OPERATIONS OF THE BOERS UP TO DECEMBER 10 . 86
Steyn's Energy—Magersfontein Position—Methuen's Force—Boers Expect Attack—British Plan of Attack.

CHAPTER PAGE

XI. THE BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN 97

Highlanders' Advance—The Heroic Wauchope—Isolated British Attacks—Highland Attack Stopped—Advance of the Gordons—Highlanders Disorganised.

XII. COMMENTS ON THE BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN . . 111

Faulty Reconnaissance — Bad Arrangements — British Tactics — Colvile's Lack of Energy — British and Boers Compared.

APPENDICES.

No. I. ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE FIRST ARMY CORPS . 232

No. II. ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE NATAL FIELD FORCE ON DECEMBER 15 236

No. III. ORDER OF BATTLE OF LORD METHUEN'S DIVISION ON DECEMBER 11 238

No. IV. BRITISH STRENGTH AND LOSSES AT MAGERSFONTEIN 240

(PART II.)

OPERATIONS IN THE WESTERN THEATRE OF WAR FROM THE ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND BY LORD ROBERTS UNTIL THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE.

XIII. THE ADVANCE ON MODDER RIVER, AND THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY 125

Roberts and Kitchener—Colonial Troops—Choice of Route — Physical Features — British Concentrate — Boer Army—British Movements—Advance of the British—No Reconnaissance—Boers Bar the Way—Effect of British Guns—Effects of the Relief—British Supplies Captured —Army Placed on Half Rations.

XIV. THE PURSUIT OF CRONJE 154

Retreat of the Boers—Action at Drieput—Cavalry at Dronfield—Cronje's Night March—French Stops Cronje —Value of Cavalry—Arrival of Sixth Division—Supply and Transport.

XV. COMMENTS ON THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND THE PURSUIT OF CRONJE 171

Strategy and Tactics—Night Marches—Reconnaissance.

CHAPTER PAGE

XVI. LORD KITCHENER DECIDES ON AN IMMEDIATE ATTACK 179
Kitchener's Tactics.

XVII. THE SIXTH DIVISION AND THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE ON THE SOUTH BANK 182
Sixth Division—Highland Brigade—Arrival of de Wet.

XVIII. THE NINETEENTH BRIGADE ON THE NORTH BANK . 189
Kitchener and Colvile.

XIX. THE MOUNTED INFANTRY, AND THE EIGHTEENTH BRIGADE IN THE RIVER VALLEY TO THE EAST OF THE LAAGER 193
Welch and Essex Regiments—Indecisive Battles.

XX. THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE 198
Artillery Bombardment—Boer Laager on Fire—Infantry Trench Work—Kitchener's Kopje—Boers decide to Surrender—The Boers Surrender—Malicious Foreign Press—Results of the Surrender.

XXI. COMMENTS ON THE FIGHTING AT PAARDEBERG, AND GENERAL REMARKS 215
Mistakes of Lord Kitchener—Faulty Tactics—Infantry Formations—Infantry in Attack—Effect of Musketry Fire—Effect of Lyddite—Personal Friction.

APPENDICES.

No. I. DISTRIBUTION AND STRENGTH OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN SOUTH AFRICA ON JANUARY 31, 1900 242

No. II. INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY LORD ROBERTS AND LIEUT.-GENERAL KELLY-KENNY . . . 244

No. III. STRENGTH OF THE FORCE FOR THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY 251

No. IV. ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE TROOPS INTENDED FOR THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY 253

No. V. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF'S ORDERS 261

No. VI. INFANTRY LOSSES AT PAARDEBERG ON FEBRUARY 18, 1900 262

No. VII. NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE BRITISH HEADQUARTERS AND GENERAL CRONJE . . . 263

No. VIII. TRANSPORT AND SUPPLY 265

No. IX. STRENGTH ON MOBILISATION 269

LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

Map 1. TRANSVAAL, ORANGE FREE STATE, AND BRITISH SOUTH AFRICA ... ... *at the end.*

„ 2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN JANUARY, 1900 ... ... *to face p.* 22

„ 3. ACTION AT ELANDSLAAGTE ... ... „ 38

„ 4. COUNTRY ROUND COLENSO ... ... „ 46

„ 5. VIEW OF THE BOER POSITION AT COLENSO . „ 70

„ 6. BATTLE OF COLENSO ... ... „ 76

„ 7. BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN ... ... „ 122

„ 8. RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG ... ... „ 214

Illustration.—THE HEIGHTS OF MAGERSFONTEIN ... *to face p.* 88

Illustration.—BOER SHELTER TRENCH AT MAGERSFONTEIN „ 92

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

The war in South Africa, which ended in May, 1902, with the annihilation of the independence of the Boer Republics, was the termination of the struggle, left undecided in 1881, between Great Britain and the descendants of the original Dutch settlers, who had taken possession of the Cape in the year 1652. During the naval wars at the commencement of the Nineteenth Century England twice seized the Dutch possessions in South Africa, and they were finally ceded to her on the conclusion of peace in 1815. Reasons similar to those which had induced the Boers, as far back as 1835, to migrate northwards led to the war of 1899. The refusal of the Boer Government to facilitate the acquisition of Burghership by the English dwellers in the Transvaal, and alleged disadvantages in political and commercial questions, gave England a pretext for diplomatic negotiations, which she endeavoured to emphasize by strengthening her garrisons in Cape Colony and in Natal.

At the commencement of the year 1899 the British troops in South Africa consisted of six and a-half battalions of infantry, two cavalry regiments, four field batteries, one mountain battery, and the volunteer levies of the South African Colonies. They were reinforced in August by two battalions, four field batteries, and three companies of Engineers, and on September 8th

the despatch of 10,000 more troops from England, Malta, Egypt and India was ordered. The embarkation of the troops from India was effected with striking rapidity, and the Government there had been informed that the despatch of another infantry brigade and one of cavalry would probably soon be necessary. The British troops in India are on a war footing, have no untrained men in the ranks, and require, therefore, no reservists on mobilisation. The great advantage of this system was apparent, not only when preparing the units for embarkation, but especially later when operations had commenced. Forty-eight hours after the receipt of the order the troops* were able to reach their ports of embarkation. The first transport sailed from Bombay on September 17th, and by the 25th, sixteen out of nineteen were on the voyage. Lieut-General Sir George White, formerly Commander-in-Chief in India, was appointed to the command of the forces in Natal; he was known as an energetic and cautious leader, and had, a few years previously, sucessfully carried out military operations on the north-west frontier of India.

In order still further to strengthen the field army, the volunteer forces in South Africa were increased, and a body of mounted infantry, about 1,000 strong, called the "Imperial Light Horse," was formed from Uitlanders and residents in the Transvaal friendly to England, while the railway companies prepared armoured trains for the protection of the lines.

But, as was the case in former struggles, the available English forces in South Africa were, up to the middle of October, quite insufficient to support, by force of arms, the demands which English diplomacy might make. They scarcely sufficed to protect certain points from

* 4 battalions, 3 cavalry regiments, 3 field batteries, an ammunition park, an ammunition column, and a field hospital.

immediate attack. Viscount Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief of the British army, had already, in the summer of 1899, advised the mobilisation of an army corps in order to enforce the British proposals more energetically, but his plan was rejected, the Government only sanctioning preparatory measures. The reinforcement of the South African garrison did not have the effect hoped for. On the contrary it strengthened the spirit of opposition of both the South African Republics. The conviction that the struggle between the Dutch and the English would, sooner or later, have to be fought out, and that the present moment was, perhaps, not an unfavourable one, was preponderant in the two States, while England's delay in adopting more serious measures confirmed the Boers in their view.

In the first days of October trustworthy information reached London which scarcely left a doubt that the Boers had decided on war, and even meditated an attack upon the weak British forces in South Africa. Several days, however, passed in deliberations, until at last, on October 7th, the mobilisation of the first army corps and of a cavalry division was decided upon. A squadron was simultaneously formed, which was to remain in the Channel in readiness for eventualities, and the Channel Squadron proper received orders to proceed to Gibraltar. During the voyage it afforded protection to the numerous transports which were leaving England by its formation between them and the French coast, the ships being prepared for action and stationed at intervals of five nautical miles. In the neighbourhood of Malta was the Mediterranean Squadron, and, at the Cape, the squadron of that name. There was, besides, a large number of cruisers along the entire route of the transports; they were partly cruising and partly at the coaling stations, in order to protect the transports while, at the same time,

preventing the importation of munitions of war for the Boers.

The Transvaal replied to the mobilisation of the first army corps by an ultimatum addressed to Great Britain. By the 11th of October the latter was to withdraw her troops from the frontiers, and not to land in South Africa those which were then at sea. England could not accept such conditions; war thus became inevitable, and arms alone could decide the issue.

CHAPTER II.

THE THEATRE OF WAR AND THE BOER FORCES.

In order to understand the events of the war in South Africa it is necessary to form an idea of the country, and to appreciate to what an extraordinary extent it differs from Europe.* The area of the Transvaal is nearly the same as that of Southern and Central Germany, together with Alsace-Lorraine, while that of the Orange Free State was about equal to that of North Germany, exclusive of the provinces of Prussia and Silesia. The variety of scenery that we find in Europe, its rapid change of character, the charming landscapes, the high state of cultivation, all this is wanting in South Africa, where a curiously rigid uniformity prevails. All natural features are on a large scale; the endless plains, as well as the bare, rugged mountains, while the gloomy grandeur and the death-like silence of the wilderness overpower the mind of the spectator. Scattered settlements and cultivated oases are to be found there, but only when there is a plentiful supply of water. South Africa is an unfruitful land, and scarcity of water is one of its characteristics. The population is, therefore, sparse, and widely scattered. Whereas in Germany there are 270 persons to a square mile, there are in Natal, the most fertile region in South Africa, only 28, in the Transvaal only 7·75, in Cape Colony and the Orange Free State only 5 souls in the same area.

* Written in 1899 by Major Count Götzen (now Governor of German East Africa) after travelling in the country.

The great sameness of the scenery and the want of variety in the landscape render it extremely difficult for a European to ascertain his position. His eye is accustomed to the numerous gradations of his native scenery, and it is difficult for him to recognise distinctive features in the African forms. Every portion of the great plains seems to resemble the others; one ridge appears to his eye to be like the next; the danger of going astray is very great, and when leaving the beaten tracks native guides are necessary.

The climate is also something quite unusual for the European. Winter and Summer are reversed as compared with their order in Europe. The hot weather lasts from October to March, and the rainy season falls in it, while with April begins cold and mostly dry weather. The variations in temperature are very great; whereas at night the thermometer frequently falls to 23 degrees Fahrenheit, the heat by day becomes gradually so overpowering as to preclude great exertions. The atmosphere is then extraordinarily pure and clear, and at night the stars and the moon illuminate the country to such an extent that the way can be found without difficulty. Night marches, therefore, are rather the rule than the exception, because they fatigue the troops far less than do marches by day. Under the influence of the long dry season Nature dies off. Most of the trees become leafless, the grass gets yellow, and its power of nourishment decreases to such a degree that horses lose much of their capacity for work, as soon as they are put on grass forage.

The change of seasons is preceded by violent storms, which gather up the loose earth and then veil an entire district in dust. The approach of the rainy season is heralded by the sky being clouded over; the temperature becomes warmer, often oppressive, and, towards

evening, there are heavy rain storms which completely change the landscape; river beds, empty of all but sand in the dry season, are filled with water, and the tiny mountain streams are often swollen, in the course of a single night, into mighty torrents. The stiff clay soil becomes a swamp, and the dried-up country is covered with green grass which, under the influence of rain and heat, grows extremely rapidly and affords nourishment in abundance to riding and draught animals.

In the dry season the length of marches must be regulated by the position of the sparsely-situated watering places, and the problem then becomes a very difficult one. During the wet season, on the other hand, Nature raises up other difficulties; the rain frequently renders night marches impossible, while by day the heat is often insupportable; in Natal, for instance, the thermometer rises to over 102 degrees Fahrenheit. Troops must, therefore, utilise the early morning and evening hours for marching, and they must, also, always have their tents with them, otherwise disease of every description is sure soon to reduce their ranks; consequently the baggage train grows enormously, for it is only the mounted soldier who can carry his equipment and supplies for several days with him. Climatic influences so unlike those to which he is accustomed often involve the European in difficulties which, to him, appear insuperable, but which the Afrikander thinks nothing of. The former requires months before his body is so trained that he can endure the exertions of marching, and a residence of several years is necessary in order to be able to understand and to find one's way about in this strange Nature. Taking these various influences into consideration, it is intelligible that troops, newly arrived in Africa, retain only a fraction of the efficiency that they would possess in Europe. Herein lies one explanation of the fact that the Boer Militia

was for so long a period able to oppose successfully the trained English troops.

In the rainy season there is another cause which seriously hinders the mobility of an army, namely, that by eating fresh grass, horses easily contract a disease which may have very injurious results and which, in some years, carries off more than half their number; in bad cases it soon causes death, because the lungs are destroyed. Whereas the Boers possess many horses which have recovered and are known as "salted," those newly imported from other countries fall victims much more rapidly than do the home-bred ones. Mules are less liable to be attacked.

In character South Africa is a table-land, and its configuration has been fairly compared with that of a plate turned upside down; the narrow, gently rising coast plains are bounded by broken ledges and rugged mountain chains, whence the country, towards the interior, subsides into far-stretching plateaus. Three terraces may be distinguished from the south towards the north-east: the Karroo, the Orange Free State, and the Central Transvaal, which is the highest. The grandeur of Nature in South Africa is especially noticeable in Basutoland, a circumstance which, together with the almost complete independence of the dreaded Basuto Kaffirs, ensured the neutrality of that country being respected during the war.

The Orange River rises in Basutoland and divides the Karroo from the Orange Free State plateau, the Vaal River, which is the northern boundary of the latter, belonging to its system. In the Southern Transvaal the rich Witwatersrand forms the water-shed between the Vaal and the Limpopo River, which is the northern frontier of the Transvaal. The spurs of the Drakensberg give the eastern portion of the Transvaal a hilly character,

and the Buffalo River, which forms part of the boundary between the Transvaal and the northern portion of Natal, rises in that mountain chain and flows east of Ladysmith into the Tugela, which also has its source in these mountains.

Roads, in the European sense, scarcely exist in South Africa; they are, as a rule, merely tracks formed by frequent traffic. In the dry season they are generally quite serviceable, but during the rains they often so completely lose their character as means of communication that heavy waggons frequently stick fast for days together.

The railways are all single lines with numerous sidings, and their gauge is only 3 feet 6 inches; hence it is difficult to forward by them large numbers of troops and the supplies necessary for an army. The railway from Cape Town runs with many windings through the mountains and enters the lower Karroo, a vast treeless tract, where water is scarce, and cultivation and population are alike scanty. North of Beaufort West the line traverses a second mountain chain and reaches the upper Karroo, still more unfruitful than the lower one, and where there are neither trees nor grass. The reddish-brown clay soil is covered with low bush about 18 inches high which affords, however, good pasture for sheep. In the centre of the upper Karroo is the important railway junction of De Aar, whence a branch runs to the Port Elizabeth-Bloemfontein line. The Karroo ends in the neighbourhood of the Orange River, which the line crosses east of Hopetown by an iron bridge 420 yards long. North of the river the country is, like the Karroo, an immense plain, but whereas the Karroo is traversed by rugged mountain chains, there are in the north, as a rule, only low ranges of hills which rise abruptly, and formed *points d'appui* for the Boer army, affording it a splendid field of fire across the flat ground in front. From Cape

Town to Kimberley is a distance of nearly 650 miles, about as far as that between Metz and Koenigsberg. Kimberley is a town of 28,000 inhabitants, and owes its origin to the discovery of diamonds. In the Seventies the population rose rapidly to 50,000, but then fell off, when the De Beers Company, in which Mr. Rhodes was the principal shareholder, united nearly all the mines in its hands and made the production of diamonds its monopoly. The mining industry afforded much technical aid in the defence of the town. The line from Kimberley follows the western frontier of the Transvaal *viâ* Vryburg to Máfeking and Buluwayo.

From Port Elizabeth two lines run through the hilly districts of the eastern part of Cape Colony and unite, east of Middelburg, at Rosmead Junction. One of them then continues northwards, while the other joins the railway from East London at Stormberg Junction. The former joins the line from De Aar at Naauwpoort and runs *viâ* Colesberg and across the Orange River at Norval's Pont to Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria. The country which it traverses from Colesberg to the north of the Orange River Colony is a vast, rolling and treeless plain crossed by low ranges of hills.

The third line runs from East London *viâ* Queenstown, northwards, through a hilly country, crosses the Orange River at Bethulie, and joins the railway to Bloemfontein at Springfontein. South of Stormberg is a branch to the Indwe coal mines, and another branch leads from Burghersdorp to Aliwal North, on the Orange River.

The fourth line, for a distance of 10 miles from Durban, traverses a tropical region and climbs, with numerous curves, the four terraces of which Natal consists. Pietermaritzburg, the capital, is situated on the second terrace, 70 miles from Durban. Between Pietermaritzburg and Ladysmith, a distance of 120 miles, the Tugela is crossed

at Colenso, and at Ladysmith the line branches off towards Harrismith in the Orange River Colony, crossing the Drakensberg, which forms the frontier between it and Natal, at Van Reenen's Pass. The railway northwards from Ladysmith *viâ* Glencoe pierces the mountains by means of a tunnel at Laing's Nek, and is continued *viâ* Standerton to Johannesburg.

The most direct communication between Pretoria and the coast is the fifth, the so-called Netherlands line to Delagoa Bay. It is nearly 350 miles in length, and traverses the mountain chain at Komati Poort. This line was of first-rate importance to the Boer States, because it is the only one of the five which did not debouch into British territory.

The British War Office could not have been in the dark respecting the peculiarities of the theatre of war and of its adversaries. Englishmen and Boers had frequently fought shoulder to shoulder against the native population, and had also been opposed to each other. Many Englishmen lived in the country; officers and engineers had, without being in any way impeded, travelled in both Republics and thereby had learned to know the country and its inhabitants.

The picture here presented to their view was quite unlike that to be seen in Europe or in Central Asia. The whole male population of the Dutch Republics, chiefly employed with their flocks, had been trained to the use of fire-arms from youth upwards. The pastoral life necessitated the dispersion of the few inhabitants over large areas, and the Boer had to depend on himself for the protection of his property. If he wished to communicate with his neighbour, to assist him, or to make common cause with him, he could only do so by traversing long distances on horseback. Accustomed to exertion and to privation, the Boer possessed all the qualities which form

the foundation necessary for success in war. When fighting against a numerous, brave but badly armed native population, and when hunting game, he had learned to study a country, to avail himself of its cover, in order to get within effective range of his adversary, and only to fire when success was certain, but to fly quickly from danger. This system of fighting was not conducive to the carrying out of a costly attack, and on religious grounds he held defence to be more justifiable; he did not pursue, but contented himself with victory, nor did he lightly risk his life; he would quit a dangerous position without damage to his moral strength, and, instead of holding out to the last, he would occupy a new one.

Thus was strengthened the self-confidence of the individual rifleman who, in the field, remained always more a hunter than a soldier. The idea was that, in a fight, it was only necessary to defeat the adversary while securing his own safety, and that a hand-to-hand struggle was at all costs to be avoided. The tactics of a number of Boers were based solely upon the employment of individual and independent riflemen who, owing to the peculiarities of their race, were only unwilling subordinates, unless the objective were immediately plain to all eyes. Advancing at great intervals they endeavoured to encircle the enemy, without exposing themselves. In the defence, which was favoured by clear fields of fire and by the good cover afforded by the rolling ground and kopjes, the Boers had learned, in their struggles against the Zulus,* what a terrible weapon is a rifle with sufficient ammunition in the hands of an experienced shot.

The fundamental conditions favourable to the growth of a race accustomed to arms began, however, in the

* On December 16th, 1838, 10,000 Zulus, under their chief, Dingan, attacked a laager defended by 500 Boers. They were repulsed with a loss of 3,000 men, while that of the Boers was only four men wounded.

Seventies to change. Game had visibly diminished, and the independent Kaffir and Zulu tribes were submitting to British supremacy, had begun to own flocks, or were in Boer service. In place of isolated farms and kraals there arose towns with a developing industry which, in conjunction with the newly discovered goldfields and diamond mines, attracted foreigners of the most doubtful character to the country. A strong central Government, apportioning burthens and rights impartially among the population, had not yet been able to be formed owing to the fact that the descendants of the original Dutch settlers clung to antiquated methods. Things were, therefore, in a transition stage little conducive to the maintenance of military qualities throughout all ranks of the people. English colonists, indeed, reported an evident falling-off, especially in the use of fire-arms, and, if this were the case, then the weak points of the national character were bound to become more and more manifest. The strength of the Boers lay in their individuality; it was better to cherish this in spite of all disadvantages than to copy an army organisation, which had been created under totally different conditions of life. Races naturally warlike, like the Turks, Cossacks, Sikhs, and Afghans, have lost much of their military value owing entirely to their having adopted European armaments, tactics, and formations.

Thus was combined with liability to service the power of each of the 42 electoral districts to nominate its own chief of the district commando, which varied from 300 to 3,000 efficient men. Under the Commandant, appointed for five years, the Field Cornets, named for three, controlled the administrative services in war and in peace. In war the Field Cornet was leader, in peace a civil servant; he superintended the natives, kept the muster rolls, and arranged for mobilisation. This consisted merely

in calling out the men and ordering them to assemble with horse, arms, ammunition, and 10 days' supplies at a specified spot. By law the Boer was only liable to military service and not to unconditional obedience, so that an order issued under these peculiar circumstances was certain to lose all its effect soon, because a leader could only impose his views either by persuasion or argument. Discipline and subordination in the field depended, therefore, entirely upon the good-will of the individual, and distant raids, or attacks which would entail heavy losses, were thus rendered impossible. No leader had the actual power to retain against his wish a man tired of fighting, and, although furlough was not supposed to be granted to more than 10 per cent. of a force, yet this rule was not observed.

The power of the Presidents of the two Republics was no greater than that of the Commandants. They had no means of stopping the lawlessness, which began when the Kaffir danger ceased, or of placing the finances upon a sound footing. In 1877, however, England annexed the Transvaal, and the opposition to British supremacy which then commenced united the fractions which had hitherto divided the country, but during the Zulu war of 1879-1880, Boers and British fought once again shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy. On January 22nd, 1879, the Boers saw an English battalion at Isandlhwana attacked in front, flank, and rear by Zulus armed only with shield and spear, and witnessed its annihilation. This defeat made a powerful impression upon the population of South Africa, but the heroic behaviour of the battalion was quite incomprehensible to the Boers, and although the British were subsequently enabled completely to wipe out this disaster, their prestige was shaken, and in December, 1880, the Boers rose and proclaimed their independence.

The moment was not unpropitious; a considerable portion of the English army was on service in Afghanistan, the Basutos were showing signs of discontent, and the development of events in the Nile Valley demanded the constant attention of the British Government. England at first began to suppress the Boer movement with insufficient means, but it was just the fighting against the few British troops which strengthened the power of resistance and gave the young levies their first tactical experience. The actions fought in that war foretold clearly the phenomena observable in the late one.

On January 28th, 1881, Sir George Colley, with two battalions, one squadron, and nine guns met a column of 800 Boers without artillery, which occupied Laing's Nek. The Boers, in order to make full use of the range of their rifles, had occupied the edge of a plateau with dismounted men; their horses, coupled together and left to themselves, were close behind the firing line, but were protected from hostile fire by the configuration of the ground. The British commander decided to make a frontal attack, and his well-ranged guns compelled the enemy's riflemen to quit their position after about 20 minutes. The Boers mounted and retired a few hundred yards to the rear edge of the plateau, where they ensconced themselves behind rocks. Although their field of fire was now limited, yet they were secure from the dreaded English shrapnel, and if this were to have effect, the guns would be obliged to come within close range of the enemy.

When the Boers ceased firing and were seen to be retiring, the English were induced to advance rapidly. The squadron, which hoped to overtake the adversary, was, however, suddenly fired into quite unexpectedly, at very short range, and was compelled to fall back while the infantry, following behind, was likewise obliged to seek cover. Mounted Boer detachments advancing

against both flanks of the British infantry decided Sir George Colley to retreat, and out of a force of about 1,600 men he lost 7 officers and 187 men, while the Boers only lost 43 men.*

In England there was dissatisfaction with Colley's leadership, and it was decided to replace him by General Roberts, who had shown himself, in the long Afghan campaigns, a skilful and cautious leader. But Colley wished to venture on a decisive stroke before the arrival of his successor, and resolved to occupy a plateau on Majuba Hill, which commanded the Boer position at Laing's Nek. By means of a night march the General reached Majuba Hill, on the morning of February 27th, at the head of a detachment of 350 infantry drawn from various units.† Each man carried 80 rounds of ammunition and rations for three days. The troops were completely exhausted by the night march and the steep climb, nor could they soon recover from their exertions, as there was no water. They lined the edge of the slope, whence they could overlook the Boer camp on the plain, but although there was on the British flank some still higher ground, which afforded an uninterrupted view in all directions, they neither occupied nor watched it.

Hardly had the Boers perceived that Majuba Hill was in the hands of the English, than they decided upon an immediate attack, to be undertaken by only 200 men. Covered by a party numbering scarcely 90 rifles, and well posted, which fired at a range of about 900 yards at everything which showed itself on the hill, 60 men, taking advantage of all cover, climbed the slope in front. A third detachment, about 50 strong, attempted similarly to reach the British flank from the East. Colley's position proved

* At Ingogo River the Boers attacked the British.—ED.

† Two companies from each of the 58th and 92nd regiments, one company of the 60th Rifles, and 64 sailors.

itself to be a thoroughly bad one. The Boer camp was indeed visible below, but the configuration of the slope protected the advancing enemy from being fired at. Every attempt of an English rifleman to raise himself or to leave his cover was stopped by the well-aimed hostile fire, and, as the Boers then succeeded in reaching two eminences on the British flank, the situation of the defenders became quite hopeless. This feeling appears to have so strongly taken hold of the individual soldier, exhausted by the night climb, that no attempt was made to clear a way with the bayonet after first pouring in a heavy fire. Sir George Colley falling, all real resistance ceased, and only about 80 men succeeded in escaping. The few still unwounded ones surrendered, and the losses were:—

Killed...	...	...	5	officers	...	113	men.
Wounded	...	...	7	„	...	121	„
Prisoners	...	...	8	„	...	50	„
Total	...	...	20	„		284	„

The large proportion of killed to wounded is remarkable and is the best proof that the final struggle took place at short range. Whereas the English loss was 60 per cent., that of the Boers was apparently only 1 killed and 5 wounded.

Similarly in other actions, the Boers on the defensive held advanced positions with a few dismounted men, abandoned them in good time, and fought the main action from a retired position, which completely protected them from the hostile artillery. Here their fire was directed at short range with extreme precision, and then a decisive result was sought for by the advance of mounted detachments against the flanks of the enemy. When attacking, the Boers advanced skilfully from cover to cover to within quite close range of the British front

and flanks in order to drive the defenders out of their positions by the accurate fire of well concealed riflemen, visible only for a few seconds. A hand-to-hand fight was avoided; victory was sought for in the concentric advance to within decisive ranges. On the other hand, the Boers were not fortunate when attacking entrenched positions; they had no artillery to prepare the assault, and, owing to their peculiarities, they would not attack resolutely; hence all the invested English garrisons were able with one exception, namely, that of Potchefstroom, to hold out until the conclusion of peace. Without any further serious fighting terms were made on March 23rd, 1881, by which the internal independence of the Boer States was recognised, their foreign relations being placed under British supervision.

In the following years the relations between the Republics and Great Britain became worse and worse. The Jameson Raid in 1896 drew the attention of the Boers to the danger which threatened them from England's South African Colonies, and the preparations, which were commenced after the war of 1881, were continued with redoubled vigour. It was, above all, necessary to provide artillery in peace time, to give the rifleman a suitable weapon and to lay in large stocks of ammunition in case of need, while forts, designed to prolong the struggle, were built at Pretoria and Johannesburg. Between the repulse of the Jameson Raid and October, 1899, these measures had been fully carried out. Meanwhile the English Intelligence Department had not remained inactive; British officers had explored the country, reconnoitred the railways and lines of advance, and had formed correct estimates as to the capacity of the land and its military organisation.

This information was contained in the "Military Notes on the Dutch Republics of South Africa,"*

* Compiled in Section B, Intelligence Division, London.

a secret work which was revised in the War Office in June, 1899. Its authors assumed that the number of men in both Republics liable to service between the ages of 16 and 60 amounted to 53,604,* of whom 22,375 belonged to the Orange Free State and 31,229 to the Transvaal. As the muster-rolls were not particularly accurate, and the youngest and the oldest classes would probably not take the field, the strength of the Boer levies might be estimated at about 40,000 men, without reckoning foreigners and Cape Colonists joining the Boers in case of war.

As regards peace formations the Transvaal had a very efficient mounted police corps, 1,400 strong, and a force of 600 artillerymen, which could be doubled by calling up reservists. The Swaziland Police numbered 120 men,† and the Orange Free State had an artillery force of 400 men, and a police of equal strength.

The Custom House returns made it possible to form a tolerably accurate idea of the state of the armament; in June, 1899, the Boers were said, according to this source, to have 34,000 Martini-Henry and 26,900 magazine rifles of the latest patterns (24,000 Mausers and the remainder Lee-Metfords, etc.). In the opinion of other authorities, however, the number of Mausers was considerably greater; Field Cornet B. Viljoen calculated their number shortly before the war at 43,000, namely, 38,000 in the Transvaal and 5,000 in the Orange Free State. Captain Holcroft, formerly of the Free State

* According to official reports from the Boer side there had been under arms, up to the end of May, 1900, in all :—

25,411	Transvaalers.
14,843	Orange Free Staters.
8,925	other inhabitants of both States mixed commandos.
2,359	Cape colonists.
734	foreigners, in corps of 25 to 200 men.
52,272	

† At Amersfort, on August 7th, 1900, some of them made an unsuccessful frontal attack across open ground on an English battery.

Artillery, assumed 70,000 Mausers and Martini-Henrys and 8,000 Lee-Metfords.

The explanation of the difference is that the English calculations could only be based upon the official Customs returns, but many weapons were also imported secretly. The authors of the War Office work, however, thought they were right in assuming that the Boers would prefer the old Martini-Henry, to which they were accustomed, to the new Mauser.

The supply of ammunition was very abundant; in June, 1899, there were 23 million cartridges in store at Pretoria, and other considerable supplies were in smaller depôts elsewhere, while, in September, further quantities of ammunition, said to amount to 25 million cartridges, were imported into the Transvaal *viâ* Delagoa Bay. We shall hardly be wrong in assuming a store of 80 million cartridges, that is to say, 2,000 rounds per rifle. Considering the care with which the individual man was accustomed to fire, and the possibility of importing fresh, if only limited, supplies during a war, such a store of ammunition would suffice for a lengthened campaign.

In the war of 1881 the Boers had no field artillery at all, and at the time of the Jameson Raid only some old guns. It was in 1896 and later that guns were ordered in Europe. For the forts at Pretoria 16 long 6-inch Creusot guns ("Long Tom") and 4 4·7-inch Krupp howitzers were to be made, and the employment of these heavy guns in the field was contemplated from the first, while, together with a varied collection of field guns, a number of light machine guns (Pom-Poms) were purchased. According to English calculations there were in the Transvaal before the war commenced—

8 heavy guns—
Four 6-inch long Creusots (weight of shell 103 lbs).
Four 4·7-inch Krupp howitzers.

19 field guns—
Six 3-inch Creusot quick-firers.
Eight 3-inch Krupp quick-firers.
Five 3-inch Vickers-Maxim quick-firers.
24 Pom-Poms (1·45-inch Vickers-Maxim machine guns).
31 machine guns (Maxims) to take rifle ammunition.*

All these guns burned smokeless powder, and a sufficient supply of ammunition had been purchased with them, while two agents of the Creusot works erected a shell foundry at Johannesburg, which was in work until destroyed by an explosion in April, 1900.

The artillery equipment of the Orange Free State consisted of—

14 3-inch old Krupp field guns with black powder.
4 1·45-inch machine guns.
6 other machine guns.

There were also six older field guns of little value. The acquisition of a considerable number of such weapons had met with the liveliest opposition in the country itself, because it was thought they would hinder rapid movements. The authors of the "Notes" shared this view, assuming, as they did, that the guns would be used by batteries as in Europe; but this is just what the Boers avoided after the first fighting,† because they perceived that three or four batteries with their ammunition wagons would seriously hamper their mobility, and would necessitate their forces remaining in large detachments. Just as they worked independently, so were

* Up to July 12th, 1901, the English had captured: Three 6-inch Creusot guns; one 4·7-inch Krupp howitzer; one 3·4-inch Krupp gun; four 3-inch Krupp quick-firing guns; twelve 3-inch Krupp field guns; three 3-inch Vickers-Maxim guns; five 3-inch Creusot guns; one 3-inch Skoda gun; one R.M.L. 6·3-inch howitzer; one smooth-bore mortar; two S.B. 9 pr. guns; one 2·75-inch Krupp gun; two 2·5 inch Krupp guns; one 2·4-inch Krupp gun; four 6 pr. M.L. guns (one S.B.); eight quick-firing 3 pr. guns; twenty-one 1 pr. Pom-Poms.

† At Talana Hill and at Ladysmith on October 30th the guns were used by batteries.

the guns used singly, every advantage being taken of cover, and position was changed as soon as the enemy had got the range.

It was also known that the Boers had a field telegraph and several heliographs, but the extent to which the personnel and workshops of the Netherlands Railway would be used could not be foreseen.

The "Notes" rightly insisted that in no other theatre of war would infantry so much require the support of cavalry as in the Transvaal, but it was not believed that the Boers were capable of resisting an attack, resolutely delivered and supported by cavalry and a mobile artillery.

CHAPTER III.

Tactics, Armament, and Equipment of the British Army.

The British military administration cannot be absolved from the severe reproach that it had not properly appreciated the tactical experiences of former struggles in South Africa; at any rate the troops had not been sufficiently schooled in the peculiar tactics of their adversary. On the other hand, the War Office satisfied, in the most brilliant manner, all requirements respecting clothing and equipment.

The insufficient tactical training of the English army is partly explained by the peculiar conditions under which it is called upon to fight; it must be ready to meet an enemy, trained and armed in Europe, or, in the border mountains of India, an adversary most skilful in taking cover and who, with even an antiquated fire-arm, makes remarkably good practice. In the Sudan it had to expect an assault by fanatics, who saw their salvation in the use of cold steel; at one time skirmishing is necessary; at another, troops must be massed together. It is, therefore, conceivable that the experiences of one war could hardly be assimilated for the general military good; it had, therefore, been left to the troops to find out the most suitable formation, and this knowledge was almost invariably very dearly purchased.

The most important result of the campaign of 1881 in South Africa was, in addition to the development of musketry training, the formation of mounted infantry,

especially intended to relieve the cavalry from dismounted fighting. It was successfully employed in all Colonial wars, with the result that the cavalry neglected that portion of its duties. The experiences of 1881 do not seem to have had any further influence upon the fire tactics of the infantry, and the requirements of a South African theatre of war vanished before the necessity of keeping in close order under all circumstances during the many years of fighting in the Sudan. This explains why the British infantry adhered to volley firing and showed a preference for shock tactics. The other arms also acquired, on the battle-fields of the Nile, experiences which could only conditionally be put into practice against a well-armed adversary. For instance, the artillery had learned the annihilating effect of its shrapnel fire at short range. It was known that the Boers had few but far ranging guns; to get quickly within the most effective range of the enemy appeared to the English artillery officers the best method of compensating the ballistic superiority of his guns. The difficulty in pushing up supplies in later wars had given British leadership a certain slowness and heaviness; so it was that English modern tactics resembled those of the Peninsular War and of the Crimean campaign rather than the skirmishing order of the Franco-German War.

But the troops who fought on the North-West frontier of India did so under quite different and more modern conditions. The necessity of improving the shooting of the individual soldier and of developing his initiative had become clear. It was from India that came the first suggestions for a change in tactics, but they were not realised before the war broke out in South Africa. All those long Colonial campaigns, much as they demanded from the troops in the way of exertions and of supporting privations, great as were the difficulties of War Office

administration which they involved, had also this great disadvantage that they were prejudicial to the understanding of war on a large scale. Troops forgot the proportion of losses, which they must suffer nowadays, if a serious attack is to be pushed home. Small losses were described as being serious, and public opinion measured the capacity of a General by the size of his casualty list.

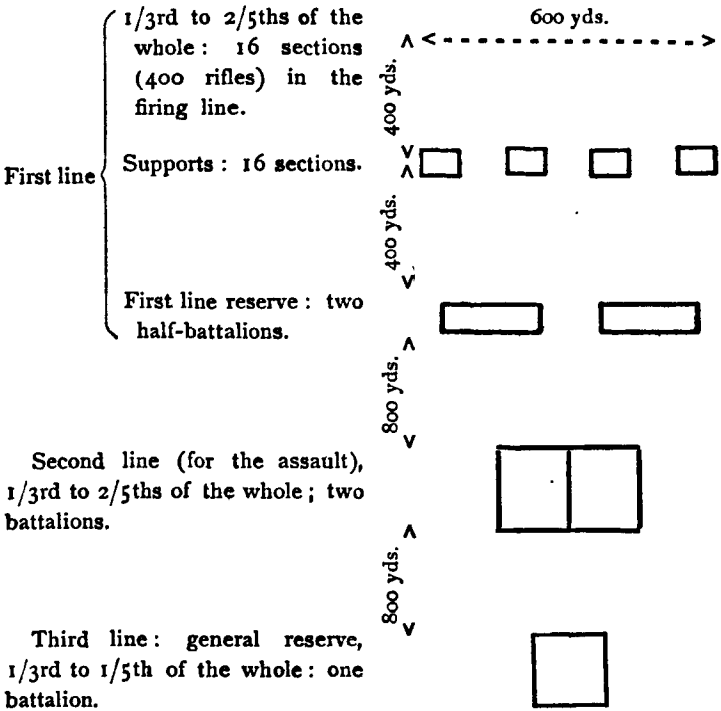
The regulations under which the army took the field in 1899 followed comparatively closely the lines of the German ones. The unfavourable conditions of training, however, under which the infantry and cavalry especially suffered in the Mother Country, where manœuvres of a varied character were almost impossible, prevented the application of the principles approved in Germany. The larger tactical units necessary to the development of combined tactics did not exist in peace time. The Generals commanding districts could exert no influence in this direction; they could inspect, but manœuvres of all arms, at which they might have been given commands, were only possible at few places in England, and the troops of their own districts were changed at stated intervals. Manœuvres in our sense of the word* being held for a portion only of the troops in Great Britain, officers and men could only learn, after mobilisation, that which war requires.

In the tactical employment of infantry the English brigade of four battalions corresponded generally to the German regiment of three battalions, with the important limitation that it had not that cohesion which results from the traditions of the German regiments. In the British army *esprit de corps* dated from the days of Blenheim, Malplaquet, and Minden, but this feeling was cherished

* Lord Wolseley had stated that manœuvres on the Continental system were impracticable in England, as the exertions which they demand would unfavourably affect recruiting.

by the battalions, which were quite independent units, those recruited in Scotland and Ireland having the most marked characteristics. The battalion, the largest infantry unit in peace, consists of eight companies of 100 to 120 men each, and a company is subdivided into two half-companies and four sections.

System of attack for a force of five battalions.*


First line
1/3rd to 2/5ths of the whole: 16 sections (400 rifles) in the firing line.
Supports: 16 sections.
First line reserve: two half-battalions.
Second line (for the assault), 1/3rd to 2/5ths of the whole; two battalions.
Third line: general reserve, 1/3rd to 1/5th of the whole: one battalion.
600 yds.
400 yds.
400 yds.
800 yds.
800 yds.

In the attack the regulations recommended an advance, if possible, to within 800 yards of the enemy without deploying. A brigade advanced, as a rule, in mass of quarter-column to within that range and was then divided into three lines. The first one, consisting of two

* A force of five battalions has been chosen in order to represent, in the simplest manner, the relative strengths of the three lines.

battalions, had a front of 600 yards or so, which corresponds to the front of two battalions in line, and on it devolved the principal part of the fighting. One-half of it formed the firing line and supports, while the other half formed the reserve of the first line, the respective intervals between the lines being 400 yards. The second line, consisting also, as a rule, of two battalions, was to decide the action by advancing to the assault; it followed the first one at a distance of 800 yards, if the nature of the country necessitated deployment at long ranges. The third line was kept in reserve and launched in pursuit after a successful assault. The idea that the last man should be employed in order to gain a victory was unknown to the regulations.

Troops, when acting on the defensive, were disposed in a similar manner, but the extent of front of a brigade was about 800 yards, and the third line was intended to carry out a counter-attack.

Very little weight was laid upon the preparation of the attack by fire. A company was to extend one, or, at the most, two sections, which were to advance as rapidly as possible until within effective range of the enemy, and the whole system of fire tactics was based upon volley firing. The sections were to advance by rushes of 30 or 40 yards* until within about 300 or 350 yards of the enemy; bayonets were then to be fixed and the advance continued by rushes until within the storming distance of 200 or 250 yards, half the number of rounds in the magazines being then fired. The second line was by this time to have drawn near to the first one, so that both could charge together.

The tactical training of the British infantry suffered from the disadvantage of being carried out on training

* "Infantry Training, 1902," lays down rushes up to 90 yards.

grounds which were too small and afforded too little variety, while the laws practically prohibited training elsewhere than on Government property. The apprehension lest troops should get out of hand and shoot badly had led to an excessive preference for volley firing, nor did the instruction in musketry and in utilising cover correspond to present-day requirements. The reports on those manœuvres, which were occasionally held, evinced, contrary to the regulations, a disposition to adopt prematurely extended formations before the situation rendered them necessary.

The traditional superiority of the British soldier in the use of the bayonet, and the conviction gained on many a battle-field from Assaye to Candahar, in the Sikh war and during the suppression of the Indian Mutiny, that an adversary not trained in a European school could only very rarely stand up against a resolute bayonet attack, had led to an exaggerated preference for shock tactics. It was not generally recognised that in the attack the blow must be directed against the enemy's flank and front. Great attention was paid to the training of the infantry in night attacks and night marches. Nevertheless, the troops and their leaders had been spoilt by the simple conditions of their training grounds, so that they found great difficulty in carrying out night operations elsewhere. Opinions in the army differed as to the desirability of night actions. Sir Redvers Buller appears to have been opposed to early starts and to operations at night, whereas Lord Methuen went rather too far in the opposite direction.

The cavalry, like that of Continental Powers, was trained first of all for attack, but only insufficiently in the use of the carbine, and, as was the case with the infantry, it had not sufficient facilities for training. The want of these rendered it all the more difficult for the cavalry to understand the tactics of the other arms. The

mounted infantry was intended for dismounted fighting, and was supplemented by Colonial levies. It had not been possible to give the horses time to recover after their trying voyage, and they were also too heavily laden, so that the cavalry were precluded almost entirely from acting on the offensive. Partly on this account, partly owing to the scarcity of maps, to the physical peculiarities of the country, and also to insufficient training the reconnaissance results did not answer expectations.

The artillery, ever the most highly prized arm of the British army, had great mobility; its manœuvring and shooting were good, but it was not sufficiently trained in fire tactics or in working with infantry. Employment in mass was sought after, but there was this difficulty, that the brigade division formation did not exist in peace, and had, therefore, too little cohesion when formed on mobilisation. Hence, as in the Colonial wars, all the leaders preferred to use batteries singly, rather than employ them in brigade divisions, and a rapid advance to within effective range of the enemy was recommended. The battles against the hordes of the Mahdi had brought out just the advantageous side of these tactics; they had not been able to withstand rapid artillery fire at short range. The regulations laid down from 1,500 to 3,000 yards as the effective ranges, and it was only at these distances that the annual practice was carried out.

In England—India formed an exception—manœuvres on a considerable scale being rare, there had been little opportunity to develop the marching powers of the troops, to increase their intelligence in reconnoitring, to train the leaders in handling large masses, or to prepare the different arms to work together in action. The army was trained for detachment warfare, but not for a great battle. It was not recognised that unity of direction, the combined action of the three arms in the fight, and

the ruthless employment of the last man can alone ensure success in war.

The infantry was armed with the Lee-Metford rifle M/95, of ·303-inch calibre, and a muzzle velocity of 2,000 feet per second; it was sighted to 2,750 yards, and the detachable magazine held ten cartridges which, however, had to be inserted singly. The weapon thoroughly satisfied modern requirements, and each man carried 100 rounds. On the four ammunition carts and two pack animals of a battalion were 85 rounds per rifle, and in the ammunition columns another 137 cartridges per rifle, so that 322 rounds were available for each.

It was not so much the rifle as the carbine which was inferior in the flatness of its trajectory and in accuracy of shooting to the Boer Mauser rifle of ·275-inch calibre. The superiority of the Boers consisted above all in their greater quickness and in their use of the rifle up to its extreme limit of range.

Both sides had machine guns, but the rather clumsy mountings of those used by the British offered too high a target and so prevented their being advanced from position to position during an attack.

The guns of the horse and field artillery had the same calibre, namely, three inches, but, curiously enough, the weights of their shells were not identical, and only shrapnel and case shot were used. The shrapnel of the field batteries (15 prs.) weighed 14 lbs. and contained 200 bullets, while that of the horse artillery batteries (12 prs.) weighed 12 lbs. 8 oz. and contained 156 bullets. The extreme range of the field artillery gun was nearly 6,000 yards, but its fuzes were only graduated to 3,360 yards. The extreme range of the horse artillery gun was 5,500 yards, and its fuzes were graduated to 3,690 yards. The fire effect of the field artillery was supplemented by batteries of 5-inch howitzers, firing a 50 lb. shell filled with

lyddite. As all these types of field guns were very soon shown to be not sufficiently powerful, naval guns on improvised carriages were attached to the army; these were 12 prs. of longer range and long 4·7-inch guns, while light mountain guns of 2·5 inches calibre were also occasionally used. The mobility of the batteries was very great; the weight of the field artillery gun and limber, equipped for service, was nearly 37 cwt. and in the horse artillery 30 cwt.

Each field company of engineers had material for a bridge 25 yards long for infantry in file, or for a bridge 15 yards in length for infantry in fours. The bridging train of an army corps could throw a bridge 105 yards long for infantry in fours.

The field telegraph equipment of an army corps was sufficient for 80 miles of line. The regulation entrenching equipment of the infantry (the Wallace spade), a combination of pick and spade, was put aside by the troops after arrival in Africa, so that only the entrenching tools of the engineer companies were available for making shelter trenches.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF HOSTILITIES.*

When Sir George White landed at Durban on October 7th to assume the chief command in Natal, the greater portion of the reinforcements from India had already disembarked; the remainder were still on the way, but were expected to arrive shortly. With these reinforcements Sir G. White had at his disposal over 15,000 well trained troops, thoroughly acclimatised to great heat. The battalions, composed only of men belonging to the active army, had from 800 to 900 rank and file each.

Sir William Symons, hitherto the General commanding in Natal, had considered it necessary to occupy with weak detachments points such as Glencoe and Dundee which were of political or administrative importance. General White took a different view and proposed to concentrate all his forces round Ladysmith, in order to take the offensive against the presumably separated Boer columns crossing the passes of the frontier mountains. The Governor of Natal, however, for political reasons, thought it right to dissuade the new Commander-in-Chief from carrying out his thoroughly sound plan. Sir G. White yielded against his better judgment; he collected, indeed, the bulk of his forces round Ladysmith, but pushed strong detachments of all arms along the roads in the direction of the enemy.

It was apparently due to political considerations, which

* Map 2.

are unavoidable in an alliance between two States of equal standing, that all the Boer forces were not concentrated in one theatre of war. Their small strength warranted no dispersion, but political reasons turned the scale in regard to the choice of a plan of operations. From a military point of view it did not matter whether all the forces should operate in the West against Cape Colony, or in the East against Natal. Both courses offered advantages, but as at that time no definite arrangement between the Boers and the Afrikanders had been arrived at, the appearance of strong Boer forces might, perhaps, have decided the vacillators and facilitated a general rising. But this idea, which was a good one from a political point of view, receded into the background in face of the desire to strike a severe blow against Natal, which was hostile to the Boers. The result of these conflicting plans was the decision to invade both Natal and Cape Colony. Of the 50,000 men, ready at the commencement of October, 18,000, under Joubert, assembled along the border of Natal; 2,000 men were in observation at Komati Poort; in the South 2,000 men were on the Southern frontier of the Free State, and 2,000 on its Northern boundary, while about 8,000 men were in readiness at Boshof and Lichtenburg for the intended investment of Mafeking and Kimberley.

On October 11th, 1899, the time fixed by the Ultimatum expired, without a reply having been received from England. The Boers, 18,000 strong with 14 guns, crossed the frontier of Natal at daybreak in three widely separated columns, while the remaining columns set themselves in movement against Kimberley, Mafeking, and Cape Colony. On October 20th General Symons' detached force at Dundee was surprised in camp by 4,000 men with 6 guns. By making an immediate attack, however, he succeeded in driving the Boers from Talana Hill,

but the British cavalry, which had been skilfully manœuvred to the Boer rear, did not understand how to utilise their advantage and suffered heavy losses. The result of the action had, nevertheless, a depressing effect upon the invaders. General Yule took command in place of General Symons, who had fallen at the attack on Talana Hill.

Simultaneously with the Boer advance against Dundee, another column from the north-west, under General Kock, had been charged with the task of cutting off the retreat of the English detachments at Glencoe and Dundee, and had, therefore, occupied Elandslaagte, 14 miles from Ladysmith on the Ladysmith-Glencoe Railway. On October 20th General French, in the camp at Ladysmith, received orders to occupy Elandslaagte again, to restore the railway and telegraph communication, which had been interrupted by the Boers, and to join hands with General Yule. At 4 a.m. on October 21st, a 7-pr. Natal Volunteer Battery (muzzle-loaders), accompanied by five squadrons of the Imperial Light Horse and one of the 5th Lancers, moved from Ladysmith on Elandslaagte; at 8 a.m. half a battalion of the Manchester Regiment and a railway construction company followed by train. These detachments united about a mile west of Elandslaagte.* The officer in command saw some mounted Boers on a ridge about 2,200 yards south of Elandslaagte who appeared to be watching chiefly in the direction of Dundee, whence artillery fire was thought to be heard. At Elandslaagte station there were also some Boers occupied in plundering a railway train.

General French ordered his battery to fire at the station, and this fire was at once replied to with good effect by a couple of guns posted on the heights 5,000 yards off. Their second round disabled the team of an ammunition

* Map 3.

wagon, and as the British battery, by reason of the great distance, was unable to reply, it was withdrawn under cover by order of General French. Some inhabitants, who had come out from Elandslaagte, stated that the Boers had only 1,200 men and two guns,* but that they were expecting reinforcements from the direction of Dundee. French, covered by the Imperial Light Horse, retired to the Modder Spruit, and reported at 8.30 a.m. to Ladysmith the result of his reconnaissance. General White resolved to reinforce him at once. At 11 a.m. the 21st and 42nd Batteries, with one squadron each of the 5th Lancers and 5th Dragoon Guards, arrived, and by 3 p.m. 7 companies of the 1st Battalion of the Devonshire Regiment and 5 companies of the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders came by train, so that French had at his disposal 16 companies, 8 squadrons, and 3 batteries.

The Boer position was on a ridge south of the railway, which afforded a clear field of fire westwards; towards the north it fell off steeply in terraces to the line, while to the south it subsided into an undulating plain which extended towards the railway bridge over the Modder Spruit, and so suggested a turning movement against its left wing. Boer posts were pushed out in front of the flanks to the right beyond the railway, and to the left on the ridge. After watering their horses the Imperial Light Horse and a squadron of the 5th Lancers advanced from the right to drive off the Boer outposts, so as to secure a position on the enemy's flank, and to reconnoitre towards Dundee. French proposed to hold the adversary's front with one battalion and to attack his left flank with nine companies and the dismounted Imperial Light Horse. The field batteries were to come into action between these two attacks in order to prepare the way for the assault. On the other wing the remaining squadron of the 5th

* The Boers give their strength as 646 men and 2 guns.

Lancers and that of the 5th Dragoon Guards, supported by the fire of a battery, succeeded in driving back the enemy's posts north of the railway and in ascertaining the extent of his position on that flank. Colonel Ian Hamilton* was entrusted with the carrying out of the infantry attack. Two of his battalions had been well schooled in India in fighting against the frontier tribes. Shortly after 4 p.m., while the batteries, escorted by a squadron of the Imperial Light Horse, opened fire at a range of about 3,800 yards against the Boer position, behind which black storm-clouds were rising, Colonel Hamilton, taking skilful advantage of cover, led his infantry forward. The 1st Battalion of the Devonshires was to advance to the left of the batteries against the enemy's front, and the remaining troops were to move against his left flank. Colonel Hamilton remained with the Devonshires, who stayed under cover until the advanced companies of the battalions making the flank attack attracted the attention of the adversary. This was the time for the Devonshires to attempt to cross the open plain, and three companies (360 men) were ordered to attack. First of all scouts climbed the ridge, then from 350 to 450 yards in rear came a thin firing line extended to about 700 yards, which was again followed at a similar distance by the extended supports. The remaining four companies of the battalion remained at first under cover and then advanced by companies in column of route.

The two hostile guns endeavoured in vain to check the infantry advance. When within about 1,100 yards the skirmishers halted and began to fire volleys at the enemy's position, and the latter replied along his whole front. The batteries utilised this opportunity to change posi-

* He had taken part in the fight at Majuba Hill as a subaltern; was subsequently Commandant of the School of Musketry, and had learned the importance of infantry fire during mountain warfare on the North-West frontier of India.

tion by advancing about 1,650 yards. The supports, under cover of the now more effective artillery fire, which silenced the Boer guns, reinforced the firing line and advanced at a foot's pace until within about 750 yards of the enemy.

The advance of the turning force was greatly facilitated by the bursting of the long threatened thunderstorm. The Imperial Light Horse, Gordons, and the Manchesters soon mixed themselves up into one single thick firing line, which advanced in continuous rushes of about 40 yards, as laid down in the regulations, against the enemy, who was effectually held fast in front and flank, and the batteries advanced simultaneously to within 2,000 yards of the Boers. Colonel Hamilton, who had hitherto commanded the frontal attack, now betook himself to the right wing and ordered the assault. The skirmishers had to traverse a distance of about 300 yards to reach the position. The signal was taken up along the whole line which, firing as it advanced, succeeded in penetrating into it. The two Boer guns had again been brought into action to repel the charge, and they were captured.

While one portion of the Boers, by holding up white flags, showed that they wished to surrender, which caused the British to sound the "Cease Fire," another Boer detachment of about 50 men made a counter-attack. This was at first successful; the guns were temporarily retaken, but the English officers again managed to lead their troops forward and finally threw back the enemy in a northerly direction. Here he came across the two squadrons which, having approached nearer and nearer to the battle-field during the action, now attacked the fugitives at a gallop and rode them down. The Boer force was completely defeated. The British buried 60 dead, found 150 wounded, and took 184 prisoners. The Boers give their loss as 62 killed and 104 wounded

per cent.; including prisoners, 54 per cent.). The English loss was trifling; it amounted to—

	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.	
Officers	5	30	35	(23 per cent.)
N.C.O.'s and men..	50	175	225	(7·5 „)

The Gordons and the Imperial Light Horse had suffered most, having been crowded together in a small space during the assault.

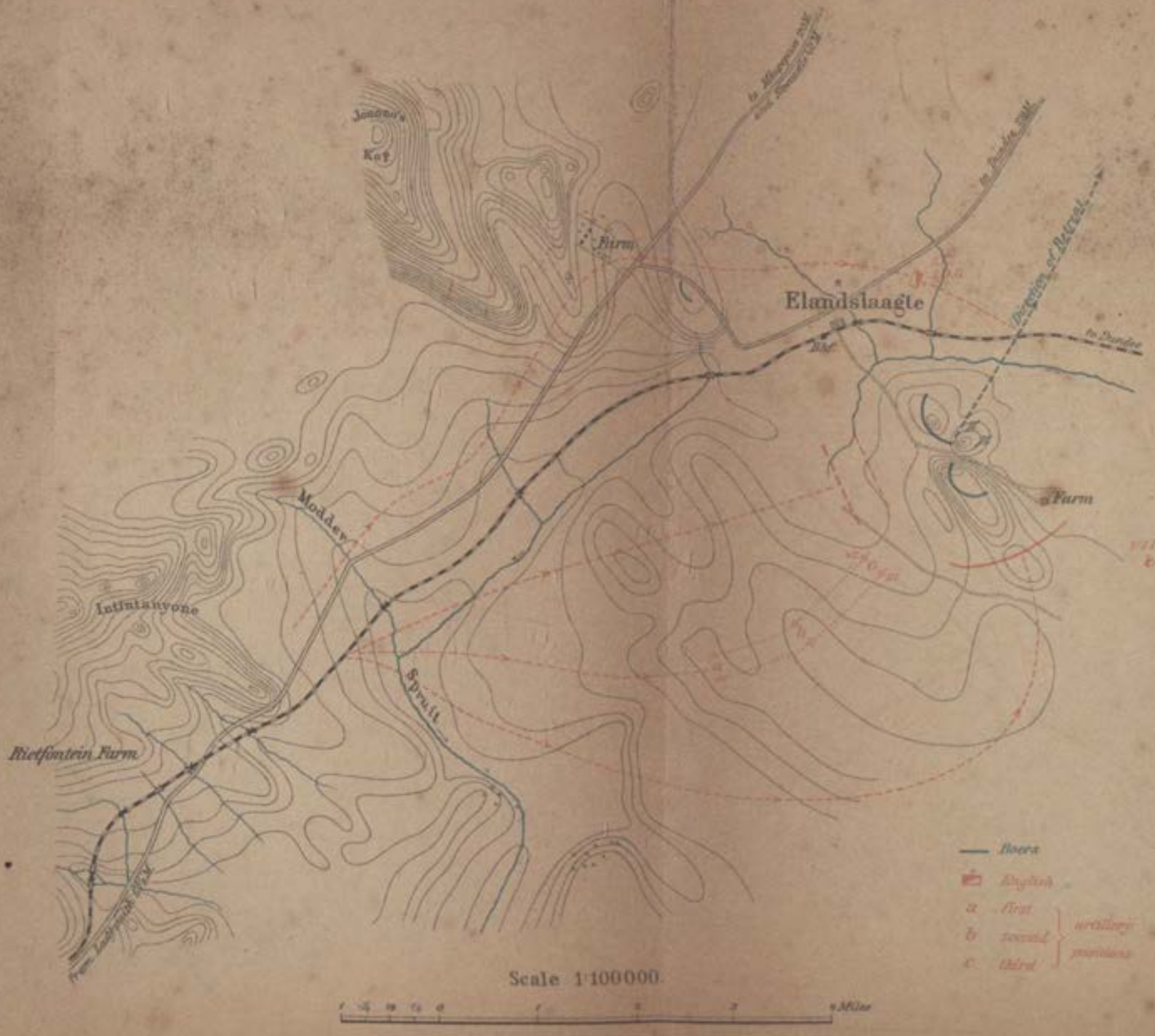
As regards tactics and training, the British force had shown itself quite on a par with its adversary. The Boers were pressed energetically in front and flank, and succumbed to the power of concentric infantry fire at very short range, which was effectively supported by a superior number of guns. On the extreme right wing individual fire had been the rule throughout. The heavy loss of officers is nothing strange for the first day a force is in action; this happens in all wars.* But the loss of men was unexpectedly small, notwithstanding the fact that the Boers had used their rifles up to almost their extreme limit of range. The 1st Battalion of the Devonshires, skilfully led across the bare plain, only lost 4 officers and 29 men, and the employment of the cavalry against the flank and rear of the enemy is worthy of all recognition. In spite of this success it appears not to have been possible to join hands with General Yule at Dundee; he learned, on the day after his success at Talana Hill, that the Boers had been reinforced and were preparing to surround him, and he decided, therefore, to avoid this danger by a rapid retirement to Ladysmith.

General White had witnessed the action at Elandslaagte; on the way back to his headquarters he received information that strong bodies of the enemy were advancing along the Harrismith-Ladysmith line of railway. As, with his divided force, he did not feel equal to coping with them he approved of the decision of his second in

* cf. Royal Cabinet Order of August 19th, 1870.

Action at Elandslaagte 21.X.1899.

Situation about 5 P.M.



command, left behind in camp, to recall General French's detachment from Elandslaagte. With his troops united he hoped to be able to resume his original plan of campaign. The mounted troops moved off from the battlefield of Elandslaagte on October 22nd, at 3 a.m., and the infantry followed by train at 6 a.m. and later.

General Yule began his retreat at 9.30 p.m. on the same day; he marched at first in a south-easterly direction and only reached Ladysmith on the 25th with his troops completely exhausted. The Boers had followed the retreating British columns and occupied positions round that place, General White, notwithstanding the two victories of Talana and Elandslaagte, not having been able, owing to his forces being scattered, to prevent the junction of the separate hostile columns as they debouched from the mountains.

He could not know that the news of these victories had induced a number of doubtfully inclined persons to abstain from joining the Boers. Now that he had succeeded in concentrating his division, he thought the time had come to strike a decisive blow. If again successful he proposed to continue the offensive, otherwise he must make up his mind to be shut up in Ladysmith, if he did not wish to leave the immense amount of supplies collected there in the enemy's hands. These could, it is true, be destroyed and the division be withdrawn across the Tugela, along the railway, to Durban, 180 miles distant, where, after the middle of November, considerable forces could arrive. But to abandon the British military camp at Ladysmith could not fail to produce an unfavourable impression upon the wavering population of South Africa and induce it to join the Boers. Should he, however, be able to hold a strong force of the enemy in check, then the advance of reinforcements would thereby be considerably facilitated. As events turned out, it was

decidedly disadvantageous for Sir George White to remain in Ladysmith, but he could not have foreseen this. Nevertheless it had to be considered, in view of a possible battle, whether, in the event of a defeat, the whole force should remain in Ladysmith, or whether it would not be better to reduce the strength of the garrison to a minimum and, with the remaining troops, especially with the cavalry, retire along the railway by way of Colenso on Durban.

On October 30th, 1899, Sir George White attacked the Boers, who were behind the Modder Spruit to the east and north-east of the town, and was repulsed. The causes of this failure are by no means to be found in the way the troops fought, but in omissions and errors of leadership, such as the insufficient use made of the cavalry, the deviation of the infantry following in rear of the artillery from the proper line of march, and the despatch of a detachment to the north to operate against the enemy's communications before the fight had been decided.* It was too late to repair these errors when the action was in progress; the right flank of the British position was turned, and as news was then received that the detachment sent to operate against the enemy's communications at Nicholson's Nek had been destroyed, General White resolved to break off the action

* In the early morning of October 30th, a column, consisting of four and a-half companies of the Gloucestershire regiment, six companies of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and the 10th mountain battery, under Lieutenant-Colonel Carleton, had occupied, after a very fatiguing night march, a long hill south of Nicholson's Nek. It was attacked from the west and south at daybreak, and Boer reinforcements, which arrived later, surrounded the British, who scarcely numbered 900 men, on the north and east. The defence was greatly prejudiced by the serious want of ammunition, the pack mules, which had been frightened by some Boer riflemen, having bolted in the night with their loads. After fighting for nearly ten hours, the British officer in command surrendered, as, owing to want of ammunition and the numerical superiority of the Boers, whose exact strength will never be known, all further resistance seemed to him to be useless, although the officers and men were prepared to cut their way through. The English lost 46 killed, 138 wounded, and 873 prisoners, of whom 37 were officers.

and to return to Ladysmith. This difficult undertaking was successfully carried out, as Joubert absolutely refused to comply with the demand of his subordinates to pursue the English troops.

During the next few days the British began to prepare for defence the heights which surround the town of Ladysmith at a distance of from 1¼ to 3 miles, the fortifications consisting of separate groups of shelter trenches with overhead and shell cover, while the perimeter of the whole measured about 17 miles. The Boers invested Ladysmith soon afterwards and approached on the north and south to within about 2,800 yards, and on the east and west to within about 4,500 yards of the English position, the length of their investment line being 33 miles. As the time fuzes of the British shrapnel only ranged to 3,360 and 3,650 yards respectively, while the Boer heavy guns could fire shell with time fuzes up to 8,750 yards, the English guns could only be used to repel a close attack. But this the Boers, for the time being, did not attempt. They contented themselves with firing, without any system, at the British positions with their field guns, two long 6-inch Creusot guns and four howitzers and, as they only employed "direct fire," ceased firing altogether at night and on Sundays and, further, spared an agreed neutral zone, the result hoped for was not realised. Although the troops were confined by day to the bomb-proof works and covered trenches, yet they were enabled, at night and on Sundays, to recover from the effects of the bombardment.

When Sir George White, on November 11th, refused a demand to lay down his arms, only some weak Boer Commandos remained before Ladysmith, while about 9,000 men in three columns advanced southwards in order to attack the British reinforcements expected at Durban which, at that time, was occupied only by men from the

Fleet. A portion of the Natal Volunteers were shut up in Ladysmith, and another portion had retired along the railway *viâ* Colenso to Estcourt. By some neglect the rifle clubs, which existed in most places, to repel the invasion which the Natal Colonists themselves had feared, had not been called out in time. The lesson drawn from the first Boer war by General Gordon, the defender of Khartum, that the Boers should be fought in their own way, namely, by mounted riflemen under specially selected leaders, whom the English troops of the line were to follow as a reserve, had been completely forgotten.

But the Boers had also lost precious time. On the day when they crossed the Tugela, the first British battalions had already landed at Durban and had been sent on at once by rail to Estcourt, where they, as well as another English detachment at Weston, were surrounded by the advancing Boer columns. On November 23rd Boer scouting parties appeared before Howick, north-west of Pietermaritzburg, and only about 80 miles from Durban, but offensive operations stopped here. News had reached Pretoria of the advance of English troops from Capetown on Kimberley and Mafeking, while considerable further forces were said to be destined for Durban. In order not to endanger the Boer columns operating in Natal, instructions were sent to them to withdraw beyond the Tugela and to confine themselves to covering the investment of Ladysmith; but, before these orders were received, Joubert had begun to doubt whether he could halt at Willow Grange with the Estcourt garrison in his rear. At a Council of War he explained his misgivings, which were shared by all his subordinates with the exception of Botha, and it was thereupon resolved to retire across the Tugela.*

* One who fought with the Boers states that Joubert decided to retreat when three of his men were struck by lightning at Estcourt, believing this to be a sign that the Almighty would not permit the invasion of Natal.

CHAPTER V.

EVENTS IN NATAL UP TO DECEMBER 5TH.

The mobilisation of the First Army Corps,* the order for which was announced in London on October 9th, had been completed in a relatively short time. Only the troops at Aldershot, which were those next for foreign service, and the Brigade of Guards had a higher peace establishment of trained men fit for service. The remaining battalions were merely depôts for the units serving abroad, and had to be brought up to war strength by the calling up of numerous reservists. On October 20th some of the battalions of the first and second brigades left England and were followed by other troops without regard to the Order of Battle. For instance, on October 23rd portions of the first cavalry and of the third, fourth and sixth infantry brigades sailed. Up to October 31st, 27,000 men, 3,600 horses, and 42 guns had been embarked; on November 15th the last transports left port, and on November 9th the first troop-ships arrived at Capetown.

General Sir Redvers Buller, with his Staff, had hastened out by mail steamer and landed at Cape Town on October 31st, but it is not known whether a plan of campaign existed in the true sense of the term. For an advance on Pretoria† two lines were open to adoption, of which the shorter one debouched from Natal, whose sympathies

* Appendix I. † Map 2.

were wholly English. A longer line of advance led from Cape Colony, along the railway to Buluwayo, across the Orange River to Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The British Commander may have decided upon the longer route, partly owing to the possibility of disembarking troops at Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Port Alfred and East London, and partly because there were, in Cape Colony, numerous Colonists of Dutch descent who were dissatisfied with British rule; the arrival of strong forces was calculated to restrain the malcontents from joining the Boers.

When General Buller reached South Africa he heard the news of the unfortunate issue of the fight at Ladysmith, and telegraphed on the same day to White to inquire whether he could not entrench himself in Ladysmith or, at any rate, behind the Tugela at Colenso, and await events. Still more serious news then came from the northern part of Cape Colony. Considerable Boer forces were assembling on the right bank of the Orange River and promised to invade the Colony, which was ripe for revolt. Within the next few days the situation became even worse; the threatened investment of Ladysmith had become a certainty and, as the indications increased that the enemy intended to invade Natal across the Tugela, Buller was induced to divert the transports as they arrived towards the threatened points, without regard to the Order of Battle. The first troopships of the first division, Lord Methuen's, reached Cape Town on November 9th. Of this division Hildyard's brigade was sent on to Durban to protect Natal; the other brigade was left to Lord Methuen and disembarked at Cape Town. During the next few days the troops to guard the lines of communication were put under his orders, and he received instructions to relieve Kimberley. Isolated bodies of troops were also landed at East London and pushed forward to Queenstown under General Gatacre,

on the information that the Boers had crossed the Orange River by the Bloemfontein-Stormberg Railway. The news that strong Boer detachments had crossed the Tugela on November 11th was met by the despatch of a portion of Gatacre's Division to Durban. During the next few days the result of the reports concerning the Boer advance in Natal was that fresh reinforcements were sent to Durban, and the commander of the second division, Lieut-General Sir F. Clery was entrusted with the chief command in Natal. He reached Durban on November 19th, and was obliged on the 22nd to report that Hildyard's brigade was already surrounded by 7,000 Boers at Estcourt, that Barton's brigade on the Mooi River was in face of superior forces, and, finally, that a third hostile column was advancing along the railway on Durban. Buller sent fresh reinforcements to Durban and went there himself, as the main portion of his army corps was now in Natal, but, astonishing as it may seem, he left part of his Staff behind at Cape Town. Recognising the inadequacy of his forces, he decided to ask for reinforcements. In England, however, the mobilisation of a fifth infantry division, under Lieut.-General Sir C. Warren, had already been ordered on November 11th.

The First Army Corps was split up into three parts; on the right wing in Natal there were, under General Clery, the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth infantry brigades; in the centre, under General Gatacre, a mixed detachment consisting at first of only 3½ battalions and 3 batteries in the neighbourhood of Queenstown; on the left wing, under Lord Methuen, round De Aar, were the first, third, and ninth brigades, the last named being composed of troops taken from the lines of communication; finally, at Colesberg, cavalry was being collected, which was to be under the command of General French, who had just escaped in time from Ladysmith. The splitting up of

the divisional organisation, owing to the peculiar conditions of the English army, already explained, did not result in the same disadvantages as would have been the case with one of the great Continental armies. Nevertheless the breaking up of the army corps has called forth sharp criticism, but is satisfactorily explained by the necessity of protecting simultaneously Natal and Cape Colony from a hostile invasion. As the brigades first despatched did not suffice for this task, it became necessary to reinforce them. The question remains whether, when the advance of the main body of the enemy into Natal was known, it would not have been more expedient to have renounced the relief of Kimberley for the time being, to have left the defence of Cape Colony to the troops already there, and to have concentrated the mass of the army corps in Natal for a decisive stroke.

With the arrival of Buller the conditions in Natal shaped themselves more favourably, and the British followed by short marches the adversary, who was retiring behind the Tugela. The advanced troops reached Frere on November 26th; on the 28th the cavalry, accompanied by a battery, moved on Colenso and pushed some hostile posts back over the Tugela. The English battery opened fire against the heights on the far side of the river, and the enemy showed artillery there which replied sharply. The railway bridge at Colenso was destroyed on the 28th by the Boers, who had, indeed, abandoned the offensive, but nothing yet showed their intention of offering a stout resistance behind the Tugela. In fact the impression was that they only meant to hold the line of the river temporarily in order to cover the withdrawal of their heavy guns which were in front of Ladysmith. The British troops remained inactive in camp, fresh reinforcements gradually arrived, and ammunition and supplies were brought up.

Country round Colenso and Spion Kop.



Scale 1·200 000.

The heights given are approximate and have been taken from numerous sources.

At the end of November the distribution of the English forces was as follows:—

	Troops.	Guns.	Machine Guns.
(1.) Invested in			
Ladysmith, General White ...	10,000	44	12
Mafeking, Col. Baden-Powell...	1,000	6	4
Kimberley, Col. Kekewich ...	2,400	12	4
(2.) The Field Army:			
Natal, General Clery	15,500	24	16
Naauwpoort, General French...	4,900	6	6
Queenstown, General Gatacre..	4,300	18	5
De Aar, General Lord Methuen	9,400	22	12
In Rhodesia	1,000	6	4
In Cape Colony	3,500	35	2
Total	52,000	173	65

Of the Boer army, some 30,000 strong, there were detachments posted along the De Aar-Mafeking Railway, and covering the investment of Mafeking and Kimberley; there were also bodies of men guarding the Naauwpoort-Bloemfontein Railway north of the Orange River, and about 4,000 men were at Colenso to cover the investment of Ladysmith. At Colenso, in place of General Lucas Meyer, who was ill, Louis Botha had assumed command; he was only thirty-five years old, but had already proved his worth in battle. Joubert also, hitherto Commander-in-Chief, had been compelled to give up his command in consequence of a fall from his horse, and had been replaced by General Erasmus and Schalk Burgher, who was before Ladysmith.

CHAPTER VI.

EVENTS IN NATAL FROM DECEMBER 5TH UNTIL THE BATTLE OF COLENSO.

General Buller, accompanied by his military secretary and four aides-de-camp, went to Clery's camp at Chieveley* on December 5th. Although he did not personally assume the command, still his presence must have prejudicially affected the decisions of the responsible leader in Natal.

Clery had at his disposal the second, fourth, fifth and sixth infantry brigades, each four battalions strong, two regiments of regular cavalry, five squadrons of South African mounted infantry, and two detachments of British mounted infantry raised from men taken from line battalions; there were, besides, five field batteries of the first army corps, two 4·7-inch naval guns, drawn by oxen, and twelve 12 pr. guns, which had been landed from the Fleet, were manned by sailors and the Natal Naval Artillery Volunteers, and had a range of from 8,000 to 10,000 yards. There was also a Field Company of Engineers with a bridging section. The total strength of all these troops amounted to about 16,000 men, of whom 2,600 were mounted, 44 guns and 16 machine guns.† There were, besides, in Natal, between Chieveley and Durban, one battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers, a battalion of the Somersetshire Light Infantry, the Durban Light Infantry, and the Imperial

* Map 4. † Appendix II.

Light Infantry. At Frere, Estcourt, and on the Mooi River respectively were two naval long range 12 pr. guns. The commencement of the operations was delayed until December 11th, as the railway bridge at Frere, 110 yards in length, which had been destroyed by the Boers, was only restored on December 8th.

The information concerning the enemy was decidedly scanty. Owing to the fact that no British reconnoitring parties had crossed the Tugela, it was not known whether the Boers had only some weak posts on the left bank, or whether they were resolved to venture on a general action in order to cover the investment of Ladysmith. Buller thought he was justified in assuming that the Boers would not seriously oppose his advance beyond the Tugela, because they had retired across it without offering resistance, and, besides, favourable news respecting Methuen's move on Kimberley was also received, and the troops elsewhere were marching northwards.

He himself reconnoitred the position of the enemy on December 6th and December 8th, and troops in close order advanced on Colenso; although they saw the Boer tents they were not fired upon, nor did they observe any preparations whatever for defence or any men on the opposite heights. Serviceable maps not being available, a sketch of the country in front of the enemy's position was made,* and the ranges to the most important points were measured with the artillery range-finder, but even then no reconnaissance was made of the river itself. Copies of the sketch were printed and issued to officers.

The Tugela, which, in Kaffir language means "the terrible one," divides the country into two quite distinct parts.† North of the river the ground rises in numerous terraces which tower one above the other, and through

* Map 5. † Map 6.

which runs the road to Ladysmith; Grobler's Kloof, a flat-topped hill, at once catches the eye. The ground on the right bank is of a totally different character; a broad ravine with steep sides falls gently away from Chieveley towards Colenso; neither tree nor shrub impedes the view, and the only available cover is afforded by some ant hills and dongas; but, owing to their situation, the latter could not be utilised for an advance. The Boers naturally did not anticipate being attacked from that direction, as a few skirmishers could easily check an advancing enemy. The houses near Colenso Railway Station afforded only slight cover, whereas an attack could be carried out within reasonable distance of the Frere-Colenso Railway under not only more favourable but, in some respects, very advantageous conditions. To the west the deep valley of the Doornkop Spruit, of which only the lower course is overlooked by the left bank of the Tugela, offered obvious advantages for an advance, while to the east of the line the country was still more suitable for an attacking force. Hlangwane Hill is a steep spur which forces the Tugela to make a large bend northwards, and it completely commands the region to the west and north. If a reconnoitring party had managed to reach its summit every detail of the Boer position would have been exposed to its view. To occupy Hlangwane Hill was, therefore, the first thing to do before making an attack, and if guns had been brought up on to it the adversary would then have been compelled to abandon the heights on the left bank.

English troops had been stationed in that district in time of peace; hence it was known that the Tugela was, as a rule, about 200 yards broad and over 20 feet deep in places, while its banks were from 18 to 25 feet in height; but there were two fords two and three miles respectively above Colenso. In consequence of the

summer heat, however, all the watercourses were nearly dry; it might, therefore, have been assumed that the river would be smaller and shallower than usual without altogether losing its character as an obstacle. As a matter of fact, in the middle of December it was only about 50 yards wide and nowhere more than about 6 feet deep, while numerous shallows rendered wading easy.

Buller proposed to make the enemy quit his position by means of a turning movement. An advance *viâ* Weenen on Ladysmith, in an easterly direction, would have necessitated a long circuit through a wooded and hilly region, and the loss of time consequent thereon, together with the difficulties of supply, caused him to abandon this plan and to decide to move towards his left. A short march, partly by night, would enable him to reach the Tugela at Potgieter's Drift, and once the river was crossed there the difficulties in the way of an advance on Ladysmith would be trifling. Buller reported his intention to the War Office in London early on December 11th; he also informed White by heliograph that he was going to attack the enemy in force on December 17th, and the latter General at once made arrangements to co-operate with Buller. Orders were issued to Barton's brigade to advance with two 4·7-inch guns and six 12 prs. early on December 12th to Chieveley, where it was to take up a position on an eminence nearly four miles from Colenso so as to cover the march. Buller, however, changed his mind on the evening of December 11th; he abandoned his plan of marching towards his left, but he did not cancel his orders to Barton. His reasons for acting thus are a matter of conjecture; it may be that White's report as to the sickness among his troops and their anxiety to be relieved, or the conviction that he had only to show a bold front to make the enemy evacuate his position was the cause. It is, how-

ever, more probable that the difficulty of supply in the event of his intended march taking place, coupled with the unfortunate news of Methuen at Magersfontein* and Gatacre at Stormberg,† impressed upon General Buller the desirability of an early success in Natal in order to wipe out the effect of these defeats. After a victory he could leave the management of future operations to Clery, while he himself might successfully direct those in the west, but a turning movement would delay his departure for several days.

At an early hour on December 12th Barton's brigade advanced to within about three miles of Colenso; the naval guns took up a position about four miles from where the enemy was supposed to be, and ammunition for the next few days was brought up. The long range rendered it extremely difficult to observe the effect of their fire, and a signalling party on Hlangwane Hill to report this would have been of great service, but, since no patrols were sent there, the British did not know that a Boer Commando had occupied it.

The naval guns opened fire with lyddite shells at 7,000 and 10,000 yards range respectively against Fort Wylie and the more northerly situated positions of the enemy in the early morning of December 13th. The fire was continued with interruptions throughout the whole day, and in the course of six hours two large gaps were seen in Fort Wylie. The enemy did not reply and the firing was resumed on December 14th; it lasted from 8.40 a.m. until 10 a.m., from 10.30 a.m. until 11 a.m., and, with short intervals, from 3.30 p.m. until dusk. Meanwhile the

* Cf. later.

† General Gatacre's attempt, on the night of December 9-10, to surprise the Boers, who held the important railway junction at Stormberg, resulted in his total defeat. The British lost 28 killed, 61 wounded, and 634 unwounded prisoners. General Gatacre was then obliged to retreat to Sterkstroom.

Boers had not fired a shot, nor had they shown any of their men, and doubts arose as to whether they still occupied their position. The cavalry had neglected to place an observation post on Hlangwane Hill or to send scouting parties across the river, nor could the British make up their minds to allow infantry to approach within effective range of the enemy's position, so that information was derived solely from incidental observations and the very doubtful statements of Kaffir spies. Buller assembled his brigadiers on the evening of December 14th and informed them of his intention of attacking early on the following day, General Clery being directed to make arrangements accordingly. Buller had been of opinion on December 11th that a frontal attack could not possibly succeed, yet he now resolved to make one, believing, no doubt, that he had only to deal with a weak enemy, and it was probably for this reason that White was not informed of his intention. The mounted troops with a battery were to advance on Hlangwane Hill, the river was to be crossed by one brigade on the left wing and by another at Colenso, while two brigades were to remain in the centre as a reserve.

General Clery, in accordance with these general instructions, issued his orders for the attack, and they met with Buller's approval.

Chieveley, December 14th, 1899,
10 p.m.

1. The enemy is entrenched in the kopjes north of Colenso bridge. One large camp is reported to be near the Ladysmith road, about five miles north-west of Colenso. Another large camp is reported in the hills which lie north of the Tugela in a northerly direction from Hlangwane Hill.

2. It is the intention of the General Officer Commanding to force the passage of the Tugela to-morrow.

3. The Fifth Brigade (1) will move from its present camping-ground at 4.30 a.m. and march towards the Bridle Drift, immediately west of the junction of Doornkop Spruit and the Tugela. The brigade will cross at this point, and after crossing move along the left bank of the river towards the kopjes north of the iron bridge (2).

4. The Second Brigade (3) will move from its present camping-ground at 4 a.m. and, passing south of the present camping-ground of No. 1 and No. 2 divisional troops (4), will march in the direction of the iron bridge at Colenso. The brigade will cross at this point and gain possession of the kopjes north of the iron bridge.

5. The Fourth Brigade (5) will advance at 4.30 a.m. to a point between Bridle Drift and the railway, so that it can support either the Fifth or the Second Brigade.

6. The Sixth Brigade (6) (less a half-battalion escort to baggage) will move at 4 a.m. east of the railway in the direction of Hlangwane Hill to a position where it can protect the right flank of the Second Brigade and, if necessary, support it or the mounted troops referred to later as moving towards Hlangwane Hill.

7. The Officer Commanding Mounted Brigade will move at 4 a.m. with a force of 1,000 men and one battery of No. 1 Brigade Division in the direction of Hlangwane Hill; he will cover the right flank of the general movement and will endeavour to take up a

(1) General Hart.

(2) The road bridge is here meant.

(3) General Hildyard.

(4) Divisional troops are those which do not form part of the infantry brigades. Cavalry, artillery, and engineers were divisional troops No. (1), and the remainder were No. (2).

(5) General Lyttelton. (6) General Barton.

position on Hlangwane Hill, whence he will enfilade the kopjes north of the iron bridge.

The Officer Commanding mounted troops will also detail two forces of 300 and 500 men to cover the right and left flanks respectively and protect the baggage.

8. The Second Brigade Division, Royal Field Artillery, will move at 4.30 a.m., following the Fourth Brigade, and will take up a position whence it can enfilade the kopjes north of the iron bridge. This brigade division will act on any orders it receives from Major-General Hart.

The six Naval guns (two 4·7-inch and four 12 prs.), now in position north of the Fourth Brigade, will advance on the right of the Second Brigade Division, Royal Field Artillery.

No. 1 Brigade Division, Royal Field Artillery (less one battery detached with mounted brigade), will move at 3.30 a.m. east of the railway and proceed under cover of the Sixth Brigade to a point from which it can prepare the crossing for the Second Brigade.

The six Naval guns now encamped with No. 2 divisional troops will accompany and act with this brigade division.

9. Refers to orders for the baggage.

10. The position of the General Officer Commanding will be near the 4·7-inch guns.

The Commanding Royal Engineer will send two sections 17th Company, Royal Engineers, with the Fifth Brigade and one section and headquarters with the Second Brigade.

11. Each infantry soldier will carry 150 rounds on his person, the ammunition now carried in the ox wagons of regimental transport being distributed. Infantry greatcoats will be carried in two ox wagons of regimental transport, if brigadiers so wish; other stores will not be placed in these wagons.

12. The Officer Commanding the Sixth Brigade will send half a battalion as baggage escort. The two naval guns, which are now immediately to the south of the divisional headquarters, will move at 5 a.m. to the position at present occupied by the 4·7-inch guns.

By Order,

(Signed) B. HAMILTON,

Colonel, A. A. G. Southern
Natal Field Force.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BATTLE OF COLENSO.*

Louis Botha had assembled some 5,000 or 6,000 men in a position behind the Tugela, and of these 800 were at Springfield in front of the right wing and a similar number at Weenen in advance of the left flank. There were also about 10,000 Boers with 28 guns around Ladysmith. Botha had employed Kaffirs to fortify his position north of Colenso, and had issued instructions on no account to reply to the British guns. The tents were to be struck at daybreak so as not to offer a target to the enemy. Everybody was to remain under cover while a bombardment was going on, the fighting position being merely occupied by a few observation posts, while some shelter trenches which the English had formerly made on a ridge, quite close to the river and in front of the Boer position, had dummy men and dummy guns placed in them with the object of deceiving the attackers. The guns available and a Maxim were so placed as to be able to direct their fire from Red Hill and Grobler's Kloof either against Colenso or the fords above it.

What Botha feared most was that he might be compelled to abandon his position by the British seizing Hlangwane Hill or turning his flank by advancing across Red Hill; nor did he consider it certain that they would not make a still longer circuit by way of Springfield and

* Maps 5 and 6.

so move *viâ* Vaalkranz on Ladysmith. Taking these possibilities into account he occupied Hlangwane Hill and an old kraal below the junction of the Doornkop Spruit with the Tugela with 800 men each. The river had not been dammed, no wire entanglements had been placed in the fords, and no men were kept in reserve; Botha, relying upon the accurate shooting and mobility of his men, believed he could repel any frontal attack and, at the same time, despatch reinforcements rapidly to any threatened point.

On the morning of December 15th the Boer forces were distributed as follows*:—The Free State Boers, under Andries Cronje, formed the extreme right to the west of Robinson's Farm; at the latter and to the east of it as far as an abandoned Kaffir kraal, situated below the mouth of the Doornkop Spruit, were the Swaziland, Zoutspanberg, Ermelo, Standerton and Middelburg Commandos, some 1,800 or 2,000 strong. Those of Bocksburg, Heidelberg, Vryheid, and Krügersdorp, which numbered about 1,500 rifles, were told off for the defence of the Colenso bridges, while 800 men of the Wakkerstrom Commando at 3 a.m. occupied Hlangwane Hill which had been evacuated on the previous day. These numbers, however, can only be regarded as approximate. As regards the artillery, three light guns were in position on the heights north of Colenso; on the eastern slope of Red Hill was a 4·7-inch howitzer, and one on either side of the road to Ladysmith; one field gun was on a low hill below the Doornkop Spruit, and there was another gun 2,200 yards north of the Colenso railway bridge. The gun emplacements had been very skilfully selected, and it was possible to change position frequently. That a British attack was imminent had been clear since December 14th, but it is not altogether improbable that Botha had

* Map 6.

been informed by a traitor of the intention to make a purely frontal attack on December 15th,* which intelligence would justify the absence of a reserve. In amplification of his original instructions Botha ordered that his men should not open fire until the English infantry should be engaged in crossing the river. In order to render possible a surprise of this description, all the posts on the right bank of the river were withdrawn with the exception of the force on Hlangwane Hill. The Free State Commando was ordered to advance against the left flank of the British, and Botha remained near one of the guns north of Colenso, a shell from which was to be the signal for opening fire.

At four o'clock on the morning of December 15th the British commenced their advance. Hildyard's brigade in the rear moved off from the right in quarter-column following the railway towards Colenso, to the east of which marched that of Barton in the direction of Hlangwane Hill, its right flank being covered by the mounted troops under Lord Dundonald. Half-an-hour afterwards Hart's brigade and the 1st Royal Dragoons † moved along the valley of the Doornkop Spruit, while Lyttelton's brigade, together with the second field artillery brigade division, followed Hildyard as a reserve. This brigade division, which really formed part of Hart's force, was ordered to take up a position from which it could enfilade the heights situated to the north of the Colenso bridge, but to accomplish this, it was first necessary to cross the Tugela. The first brigade division was to march at 3.30 a.m and, supported by Barton's infantry,

* According to information from the Boer side, some commandants are said to have decided, on December 14th, and without Botha's knowledge, to abandon the Tugela position, but the latter appeared unexpectedly during their deliberations, and succeeded in persuading his subordinates to hold their ground.

† His Majesty the German Emperor is Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment.

was to come into action east of the railway in order to prepare the way for Hildyard's passage across the river. General Buller had stated in a Memorandum that at first only the naval guns could render effective aid, as it was impossible to bring the field batteries into action without risk. Six naval 12 pr. guns followed the first brigade division; four similar guns and two 4·7-inch guns were in readiness on Shooter's Hill, and two 12 prs. were 2,200 yards further to the rear on Gun Hill.

At a quarter before five o'clock in the morning, just at daybreak, the six naval guns on Shooter's Hill opened fire at a range of 4,400 yards on the heights north of Colenso, which had been previously bombarded. The distance was accurately known, and the heights were soon enveloped in the heavy, yellowish smoke of the lyddite shells. The gunners were convinced that no enemy could stand his ground in the face of such accurate fire; field glasses failed to reveal the presence of an adversary, nor was a single shot fired from his direction. Consequently the conviction that the Boers had already evacuated their position and that the British were too late was gradually strengthened. A rapid pursuit was, under the circumstances, urgently necessary.

The officer commanding the artillery, Colonel Long, who accompanied the first brigade division, had contributed largely to the victory at Omdurman by bringing his guns into action at decisive range. Although the Boer guns carried far, he was still in favour of similar tactics, and felt greatly hurt at Buller's Memorandum, which condemned the field artillery to remain at first inactive. His opinion was that weak patrols alone held the bridge and that they were overpowered by the fire of the naval guns. He felt bound to come into action quickly, if he was to carry out his task of preparing a passage for Hildyard's brigade, which was then approach-

ing. Every soldier must agree with his resolve to advance regardless of the less mobile infantry, and the only question is whether it would not have been more appropriate to unlimber at perhaps about 2,200 yards from the left bank.

The batteries, therefore, with their ground scouts about a quarter of a mile in front, advanced at a trot to the east of the railway, while the naval guns, drawn by oxen, followed slowly in rear. There was no sign of the enemy, and Long, when abreast of Colenso, gave the order to come into action about 600 yards from the river. This was what the Boers had been awaiting, and one shell, fired from the gun north of Colenso, gave the signal for opening fire along the whole line. The hour was six o'clock.

Some time elapsed before the Boers concentrated their fire upon the batteries and found the range, so that it was possible for the British to unlimber and send their teams to a watercourse a quarter of a mile to the rear, while some cover was found for the ammunition wagons about 900 yards behind the guns. The officers who were still apparently mounted, soon had five of their number, including the brigade division commander, put out of action, and, therefore, the fire of the guns could not be concentrated immediately on Fort Wylie, whence the hottest infantry and shrapnel fire appeared to come. The position was quite unsuitable, it afforded absolutely no cover, and the Boer infantry was within 1,200 yards of it.* Nevertheless the artillery held their ground with apparently some measure of success, since the fire from Fort Wylie became visibly weaker. The naval guns were engaged in crossing a watercourse† about a quarter of a

* The statement that the Boer riflemen were only 650 or 850 yards distant seems less probable.

† The same, apparently, in which the gun teams had taken cover.

mile behind, and Hildyard's brigade seems to have been still further to the rear, when the Boers opened fire. Its brigadier, perceiving that the enemy intended, apparently, to maintain his position north of Colenso, adopted a very suitable formation for his four battalions.

It was impossible for the naval guns, drawn by oxen, to advance further, and there were also difficulties in the way of unlimbering, because a portion of the Kaffir drivers had fled at the first shot, so that the detachments could only gradually bring the guns into action about 400 yards from the batteries in front. Three of the guns attached to the mounted troops also took part in the fight from a south-easterly direction at 3,300 yards range, and the pressure on Colonel Long's batteries was considerably diminished. Their situation would have become yet more favourable if once the British infantry should come up, but, as matters stood, they had only their limber ammunition, and since all attempts to bring up some wagons with a fresh supply failed, the artillery commander decided to cease firing at seven o'clock, after a hot action which had lasted an hour. He intended to await a favourable moment to get up a fresh supply of ammunition and then resume the fight. The elimination of these 12 guns could not, however, be a matter of much moment, since 12 naval and 3 field guns were then in action, while to the westward the fire of 12 guns belonging to the other brigade division, which were to enfilade the heights north of Colenso, was heard. There were, therefore, altogether 27 guns in action against the Boers.

The two batteries under Colonel Long's command had lost 2 officers and 8 men killed, and 3 officers and 26 men wounded; they cannot, therefore, by any manner of means be said to have been crushed in consequence of this small loss. The British artillery officers themselves did not think so when they withdrew their men under

cover at seven o'clock, which they were able all the more easily to do as the English skirmishers were then approaching the batteries.

General Buller thought otherwise; he also had been visibly astonished by the unexpected outbreak of the enemy's fire, and when Colonel Long's two batteries ceased firing he believed them to have been exterminated. Regardless of personal danger, he went close up to them and concentrated his attention solely upon what had taken place there. He was dominated by the one idea not to allow the now immovable guns to fall into the enemy's hands. Yet nothing could have rejoiced the English more than that the Boers should have assumed the offensive; there was no question of risk as far as the guns were concerned, and when artillery has once been brought up into position, it is always easier and productive of less loss to keep it there than to limber up and retire under fire. The bravery of the officers and men, who lost their lives in the attempts to save the guns, is deserving of all praise, but it was a useless sacrifice, especially as a strong body of infantry then came into action which compelled the Boers to divert their fire from the batteries and to turn it on the new and more formidable opponent. If General Buller had not insisted upon the guns being withdrawn, and if Colonel Long had not been dangerously wounded, the batteries could then have replenished their ammunition and again taken an effective part in the battle.

The escort to the guns, consisting of half a battalion of the Scots Fusiliers, and half a battalion of the Irish Fusiliers, took up a position to the right and left rear of the batteries. The deployment of Hildyard's brigade to the west of the railway took a long time, and it still remained for it to cross the 400 yards or so which separate Colenso from the Tugela, Hildyard

being apparently of opinion that the ground to the east of the line was unsuitable.

The battalion of the West Surrey Regiment advanced in successive lines of skirmishers, in spite of a hot fire, to within about 350 yards of Colenso, while the Devonshires, marching half-right, placed themselves on the right flank. Both battalions, availing themselves skilfully of what little cover there was, advanced in extended order until they reached the northern outskirts of Colenso, where they ensconced themselves and forced the Boers to evacuate their foremost shelter trenches. This was seen by the naval gunners, but no advantage was taken of the opportunity which offered itself, as they thought that their own infantry was advancing. The naval guns contented themselves with pouring a tremendous fire on to the ground in rear of the Boer position, which prevented any movements of troops taking place there, and no further progress was made at Colenso. Both battalions had lost about a hundred men altogether, and General Hildyard rightly abstained from launching his two battalions of the second line in broad daylight to storm the bridge. It would only have been possible to do this either under cover of darkness or after Hart's brigade on the left wing should have crossed the Tugela.

This brigade had meanwhile come into action. Its commander was of opinion that it was important to keep troops in close formation as long as possible, and to postpone the extension of the firing line as late as possible. The brigade advanced at first in mass of quarter-column along the narrow valley of the Doornkop Spruit, but then, misled by a Kaffir guide, it deviated to the right instead of to the left where it was to have forded the Tugela. The Royal Dragoons having reported that numbers of the enemy were to be seen on the far bank, the Dublin Fusiliers,

which was the leading battalion, advanced in line of company columns at deploying intervals. The battalions in rear were still in column of route in a defile, which prevented their deployment, when suddenly a gun opened upon them with shrapnel from Red Hill. Thereupon the Free Staters, ensconced on the outskirts of an abandoned kraal, opened fire, as did also a gun on Grobler's Kloof with shrapnel. The English reports vary greatly as to the ranges; but they agree generally in stating that they were from the outset very short, whereas the Boers state that they varied from 850 to 1,100 yards, which is the more probable considering the losses, which were not very heavy. Some skirmishers belonging to the two leading battalions managed to reach the river bank; they were supported by two British batteries, which were in position to the west of the Doornkop Spruit, and they held their ground for a considerable time, although all attempts to cross the Tugela failed.

Buller heard the news of this failure at the time when the first endeavours to save the guns had collapsed, and unfavourable intelligence was also received from the extreme right wing.

Lord Dundonald had advanced against Hlangwane Hill with 800 mounted infantry* and a battery, the guns coming into action on the low ground in order to support the attack of their infantry. The latter had dismounted at seven o'clock near the Gomba stream, and at 8 a.m. began to climb the hill, having the 13th Hussars on their right. The men were able to extend, although they were surprised by the enemy's fire at short range, but their advance was stopped, as only some of the guns were firing at the hill, the remainder having been turned against Fort Wylie. The Boers, who appeared to be as strong in numbers as the attackers, had the advantage of good

* Bethune's mounted infantry had remained behind as baggage escort.

cover and held their ground, repelling an attempt to turn their left flank. General Barton refused to comply with Dundonald's request for reinforcements, on the ground that he dared not send any without orders, and the attack came to a standstill, General Buller, himself, believing that it could no longer succeed.

He had gone into action convinced that only a weak detachment barred his way, but he now estimated the strength of the enemy at 15,000 men, while the naval gunners declared that they had counted 20 Boer guns! The plans of the British Commander-in-Chief had not allowed for the possibility that the Boers might offer a determined resistance, and he, therefore, now decided at 9.30 a.m. to break off the action. His troops, however, could undoubtedly have remained where they were during the great heat of the day, and an attempt could have been made, under cover of darkness, either to storm the bridges or to concentrate all their strength for an attack on Hlangwane Hill, now clearly recognised as the key of the position. Sir Redvers Buller, in his Despatch, gives as his reason for breaking off the battle the disaster to the guns, alleging that if, when the critical moment arrived, his orders had been carried out he would have captured the position. But he considered that an attack made without the close support of the artillery would have been a useless sacrifice of brave men. It is true that to have pursued his original plan was no longer possible; although 10 battalions had not hitherto been in action, yet the great heat necessitated that the troops should first have some repose with a view to further operations in the cooler hours of the afternoon.

Fresh attempts were now made to withdraw Colonel Long's guns. Two officers of Buller's and Clery's Staffs endeavoured to bring up some teams to the batteries, but they were both severely wounded and the horses laid low by the fire of the machine guns. The captain of

Dundonald's battery tried to reach the guns with 22 horses and 13 men, but before he could do so he had lost 13 of the former and 7 of the latter; being then himself wounded, the men abandoned the attempt. Captain Schofield,* however, was more fortunate, for he succeeded, with the aid of two teams, in getting two guns of the 66th Battery away.

Buller issued orders at 11 a.m. that no fresh efforts should be made in this direction, and that the infantry was to continue its retreat. So long as the naval guns remained in action, the Boers could not dream of carrying off their tokens of victory, but the former now also received instructions to retire. This, however, could only be done by the aid of the teams of the abandoned field batteries, as the naval guns had, meanwhile, been rendered incapable of movement owing to the panic which had seized the Kaffir drivers and the losses among the oxen.

The retirement of the infantry was a very difficult operation. First of all Hart's brigade was ordered to retreat, covered by two of Lyttelton's battalions, which were deployed to the right and left of the Doornkop Spruit and almost abreast of the batteries of the second artillery brigade division. The latter, with the Dragoons as escort, remained in action until close on 11 a.m.; they then retired across the Doornkop Spruit, took up a position just to the west of the railway and from it covered the retreat of the infantry.

Still more difficult was the withdrawal of Hildyard's skirmishers, who were in and around Colenso, close to the enemy. The brigadier, therefore, hesitated to give effect to the order sent to him, fearing that he must suffer heavily by retreating under the enemy's fire across

* He was recommended for the Victoria Cross, but Sir Redvers Buller refused to forward the recommendation on the ground that Captain Schofield had only acted in obedience to orders. It was, however, ultimately awarded to him.

a perfectly open country, while, at the same time, the fate of the guns would be sealed by his retirement. But Buller sent him fresh instructions after 11 a.m. to retreat at once regardless of the guns, and General Hildyard then ordered both his battalions in reserve to take up a covering position. Supported also by the artillery, he was able to collect his two leading battalions without much loss. The retreat of the right wing was likewise eventually accomplished under cover of one of Barton's battalions. All the British had left the battle-field by 2.30 p.m., with the exception of some isolated groups, which had either not received the order to retreat or else would not obey it, and apart also from wounded and exhausted men, who were left on the field, some of them falling into the hands of the Boers. The brigades returned to their camp at Chieveley.

The Boers did not cross the Tugela until 4 p.m., when they came across a small party of Hildyard's force, under Colonel Bullock, which still held its ground. It was soon surrounded, and the men, who were either wounded or else completely exhausted by the heat, were captured. The French lieutenant, M. Galopaud, states that 9 officers and 150 men fell here into the hands of the enemy, who then took possession of the 10 guns, with their limbers, and 9 full ammunition wagons which had, apparently, been forgotten.

The British loss was small; it amounted to 71 officers and 1,055 non-commissioned officers and men, or, in other words, less than 8 per cent. of the whole force.*

The losses sustained by the infantry brigades, which

---

* According to Norris' "The South African War."

					According to the "'Times' History."			
Killed...	7 officers		125 men		7 officers		138 men	
Wounded	43	"	722	"	43	"	719	"
Missing	21	"	201	"	21	"	199	"
Total	71	"	1,048	"	71	"	1,056	"

were really in action, and by those in the second line, together with the other arms, were as follows:—

	Killed.		Wounded.		Missing.	
	Officers.	Men.	Officers.	Men.	Officers.	Men.
Infantry Brigades of the First Line.						
Second Brigade (Hildyard) ...	—	16	7	186		
Fifth Brigade (Hart)	4	75	16	369		
Infantry Brigades of the Second Line.						
Fourth Brigade (Lyttelton) ...	—	—	3	8		
Sixth Brigade (Barton) ...	—	14	1	45		
Cavalry and mounted troops...	1	15	7	65	21	207
Artillery	2	9	6	41		
Navy	—	—	—	3		
Other troops	—	—	—	2		
Staff	—	—	3	—		
Total*	7	129	43	719	21	207

The six battalions, numbering about 4,800 rifles, which had borne the brunt of the infantry action, lost 40 officers and 680 men killed, wounded and missing (15 per cent.), of whom 31 officers and 448 men (15 per cent.) belonged to Hart's brigade which advanced in close formation. The losses of the remaining 10 battalions, which had not taken a serious part in the battle, amounted to less than 120 men!

The Boers had purchased their success with the trifling loss of 6 killed and 21 wounded. Considering their small numbers they were justified in not pursuing, and an order, which was sent several times to their right wing to follow Hart's brigade, was, with good reason, not obeyed. Buller subsequently asked for an armistice in order to bury the dead and to collect the wounded, and the victors granted his request.

A stationary hospital, which had been held in readiness at Frere before the battle, was established at Chieveley,

* The figures in the German text differ somewhat from those given here. This total has been taken from English official sources, the numbers mentioned in the German work being as follows: 6 officers and 146 N.C.O.'s and men killed; 52 officers and 713 N.C.O.'s and men wounded; 4 officers and 33 N.C.O.'s and men missing.—(Trans.).

to which place an ambulance train had also been brought; four field hospitals were erected about 500 yards north of Chieveley, and the dressing stations were set up under cover about a quarter of a mile behind the firing line. The medical service was hampered less by the number of the wounded than by the extent of the battle-field. A volunteer bearer corps of 2,400 men undertook the task of bringing the wounded to the dressing stations and to the field hospitals. By 5 p.m. all the wounded had been bandaged and were in the hands of the doctors; they were then sent to Estcourt in an ambulance train, which performed the journey from Chieveley to Estcourt five times between 2 p.m. on December 15th and 8 a.m. on December 17th. Some of the cases were sent on to Pietermaritzburg and Durban, but as there was not sufficient hospital equipment at those places, it was decided to despatch the sufferers to Cape Town, in order to take advantage of the favourable climate and local conditions which prevailed there. No proper hospital ships were available, but a transport was fitted up in the course of four and a-half days for the accommodation of 250 invalids.

Depressed by his defeat, Buller heliographed to White to the effect that as it seemed certain he could not relieve Ladysmith for another month, and then only by means of lengthy siege operations, White should burn his cyphers, destroy his guns, fire off all his ammunition and make the best terms possible with the general commanding the besiegers, after first giving Buller time to fortify himself on the Tugela. It is worthy of note that Sir George White thought this heliogram was an artifice of the Boers, and he was confirmed in this view at first because he had gathered from Buller's signalling station at Weenen on December 15th that matters were progressing satisfactorily.

CHAPTER VIII.

Comments on the Battle of Colenso.

The causes of the English want of success at Colenso are first of all to be sought in the lack of sufficient force of character in the general in command.

General Buller had made a reputation in Colonial warfare as a tenacious and energetic commander, who had complete confidence in his own ability and that of his troops. His tactical views are best learned from his remarks on the manœuvres of 1898. In them he had blamed the divisional leaders for pursuing too many objectives at one time, and for scattering their troops; he had pointed out the necessity of all troops and all arms working together in action, and of obviating excessive extensions of front. He had also blamed premature deployments, if the configuration of the ground should permit of close order being maintained. He reproached the infantry with insufficient training in the individual use of the rifle; the cavalry and artillery for failing to grasp the tactics of the other arms. Finally he remarked that, in action, touch was wanting between the artillery and the general in command. Although these criticisms showed Sir Redvers Buller to be thoroughly abreast of the times, he was, nevertheless, completely imbued with the conviction that, in the field, no task was too difficult for infantry if well led. In the opinion of the public he was just the man to lead troops strenuously to victory.

The rapid retreat of the Boers in Natal had strengthened

him in the conviction, which was confirmed by the silence of their artillery when the British guns were firing at the heights on the left bank of the Tugela, that he had only to do with weak posts, which would scarcely offer serious resistance. This idea showed itself in his dispositions; he wished to be only a spectator of the probably trifling action, the command in which he had transferred to General Clery, a recognised tactician of the English army. With this conception of the situation, Buller left his headquarters on the morning of December 15th; he rode past the well-ordered infantry columns on the march, and betook himself at first to the small eminence south of Colenso in order to observe the progress of the fight. As no hostile shot was fired, nor any notice taken of the fire of the naval guns, which had opened at 5.30 a.m., he was confirmed in his original opinion, and he may then have considered whether it was really necessary to send cavalry towards Hlangwane Hill. The advance of the infantry was certain to clear up the point soon, but before it could approach the Tugela bridge at Colenso, the misfortune to the two batteries had occurred.

Buller, on becoming conscious that he had been mistaken in his conception of the enemy's intentions, and not having sufficient breadth of mind to grasp the altered situation, thrust Clery aside and interfered by taking the matter into his own hands. He hurried to the batteries, which were still in action, but which soon ceased firing owing to want of ammunition. Self-confidence and deliberate reflection had vanished; he was no longer the leader, but merely a fellow-combatant; no longer the general, but only a battery commander. The physically brave man had succumbed morally to the impressions of the battle-field. His whole attitude was now regulated by the one overmastering determination not to allow the guns to fall into the enemy's hands, but he was not clear

whether they ceased firing from want of ammunition, or whether they were completely crushed. Buller appears to have assumed the latter hypothesis, but he absolutely forgot that a battery may, indeed, be rendered incapable of movement by hostile fire while still being able to render very material service, even though the gun detachments may have suffered heavy losses. Before his very eyes futile endeavours were made to withdraw the guns, and officers of his Staff, including the son of Field Marshal Lord Roberts, paid the penalty with their lives. Nobody was near him to explain that to hold out is easier than to go back under hostile fire, but when Buller himself was wounded, when bodily fatigue on that blazing hot day asserted itself, when, from other parts of the battle-field, Job's messengers arrived, then his elasticity failed him. He gave way, because he believed that there was nothing else to be done, and he wished to bring to a conclusion the action, which had been commenced under quite different assumptions. Orders to retreat were issued, but it was the general and not his gallant force that was defeated. Victory, however, was still possible; there were 27 guns in action, and 8 out of 16 battalions had not yet been brought into the battle. If Buller had held his ground, then December 15th would have been merely an indecisive, unimportant fight, or a reconnaissance in force. If the blazing hot midday hours had been allowed to pass by, Hlangwane Hill could have been occupied in the afternoon, or the bridge at Colenso might have been stormed at dusk, or shortly before daybreak. Combatants on the Boer side declare that a night attack would probably have been successful. On the other hand, if the British were to retreat, then the indecisive action would be magnified into a serious defeat, the effect of which upon the garrison of Ladysmith and upon the demeanour of the Dutch population could not

yet be estimated. Buller, by retreating, acknowledged the superiority of his adversary.

It is not clear why Buller omitted to inform Sir G. White of his intention to attack the Boers on December 15th, for there was uninterrupted heliographic communication between the two British camps. The inaction of the Ladysmith garrison can be explained by the fact that it attributed no greater significance to the thunder of the guns at Colenso than it had done to the bombardment which had preceded the battle. According to the information transmitted from the signalling station at Weenen the combat was progressing satisfactorily, and, besides, Buller had said he was not going to attack the enemy in force until December 17th. Sir G. White, therefore, had every reason to spare his troops for the great battle, which had been decided upon, and which would probably have to be fought in the vicinity of Ladysmith.

It would have been too much to expect that General Buller should have sought for the causes of the failure in his own person and in his own dispositions. His erroneous conception was solely due to insufficient reconnoitring. Not a single British patrol had attempted to cross the Tugela; no British observation post was on the summit of Hlangwane Hill, whence it would have been possible to overlook the entire country on the left bank of the river, and so the changes in the Boer positions there escaped the English. At any rate, on the morning of the battle, they were uncertain whether the hill was or was not occupied. In Paragraph No. 1 of the Divisional Orders it was only stated that to the north of it, that is to say on the left bank of the river, there was a Boer laager. In Paragraph 7 the mounted troops were directed to advance in the direction of the hill and to endeavour (!) to take up on it a position from which the heights of Colenso could be enfiladed. In Paragraph

6 the sixth infantry brigade was ordered to advance in the direction of the hill to a position from which it could cover the right flank of the second brigade. Therefore the orders show pretty clearly that the Staff did not know whether the hill was occupied or not. A German combatant on the Boer side has stated that the English patrols went scarcely five miles away from their own camp. "Just as it is difficult to see anything here, so is it equally easy to reach, unseen, a particular point, especially by making a circuit." To the topographical difficulties in the way of reconnaissance, which, according to Lord Methuen, render it impossible for mounted troops to approach within 2,000 yards of infantry, must be added the influence of smokeless powder, which enables a few well covered riflemen to keep off mounted detachments with ease. In any case cavalry will be compelled more than formerly to use the horse as a rapid means of locomotion, in order to reconnoitre the adversary on foot. This will often only be possible by one portion dismounting and opening fire, while another portion, taking advantage of cover, endeavours quietly, to approach the enemy.

While the cavalry had merely ascertained the enemy's presence on the far bank of the river, but without being able to learn his strength and the extent of his position, the silence of the Boer guns during the firing on December 14th confirmed Buller in his original opinion that he had only to deal with a weak detachment, which would evacuate its position as soon as seriously attacked.

While the British guns were firing slowly at long ranges and no infantry was as yet in action, there was no reason why the Boers should see in this artillery fire anything more than a cannonade. It was only when skirmishers opened fire at infantry medium range that the Boers were able to believe in the possibility of an attack, and then,

of course, they felt compelled to occupy their fighting positions.

On the above assumption, then, Buller had issued his orders for the advance. Considering the uncertainty of the situation it was at least incautious to send the infantry columns against heights, which might possibly be occupied, without, at any rate, holding the batteries in readiness, or seizing Hlangwane Hill, whence the defence of the heights on the left bank could be impeded and further deployment facilitated in a high degree.

But, if Buller's assumption were correct, he would have to calculate on the greater loss of time, which the purely frontal attack of the bridge at Colenso would occasion. The enemy's resistance could be more quickly broken down if the detachments on the flanks should come into action simultaneously with those destined for the frontal attack. According to the orders, however, Hart's brigade was to move off half-an-hour later than, and the mounted troops at the same time as the second infantry brigade. As Hart's brigade had less distance to go, it was bound to reach the Tugela about the same time as that of Hildyard.

The surprise of Hart's brigade and of the artillery by the enemy's fire are events which occur in every campaign, especially during the first battles; they are fortuitous and can only be to a certain extent guarded against by good reconnoitring.* The subordinate leaders must be taught

* On August 18th, 1870, the artillery of the 18th infantry division and the Corps artillery of the ninth Corps, which were ahead of the infantry advanced guards, were, as they were coming into position on the heights north-east of Verneville, completely surprised by French infantry fire at scarcely 1,100 yards range. Fired at concentrically in front, on the left flank, and even partly taken in rear, the artillery suffered great loss in a very short time. The reason for this precipitate pushing forward of the guns without infantry protection was the erroneous conception of the situation formed by the General commanding the ninth Corps on insufficient reconnaissance data. He took the 4th French Corps, which was still in camp on the heights at Amanweiler, for part of the rear-guard of the French army, which was supposed to be retreating on the Orne, and he wanted to hold it fast by means of a "strenuous attack" by the artillery, which had been hurried up in front of the infantry.

to extricate their men rapidly from such a situation. However well trained for war troops may be, the first action brings surprises* which must be reckoned with, and which may frequently lead to an immediate alteration in the conduct of a battle.

The advance of Hildyard's two leading battalions across the open plain in several thin and successive lines of skirmishers was well managed, and their losses were, in consequence, very small. The Brigadier's resolve not to put his last battalions into a purposeless attack on the bridge was perfectly right. He had to keep them back in order to give the Commander-in-Chief the possibility of not only changing his plan, which had been based on false assumptions, but also of attaining his object.

Concerning the Boer method of fighting, the German Military Attaché, Captain von Lüttwitz, wrote as follows: "The continuous infantry fire of the Boers, at medium and long ranges, is described also in this battle as having been beyond all praise. True, the ranges had been accurately measured beforehand without the English suspecting this, and the artillery always found the range at the first round." The Boers had confined themselves to a pure but extremely skilful defensive; their weak force prohibited all offensive action, nor was it possible for them to reap the spoils of their victory to any real extent.

* When, on August 16th, 1870, the 2nd Battalion of the 35th Fusiliers attacking Vionville, crossed the hill south of it in two lines, it was surprised at a range of scarcely 550 yards by such an overwhelming shell, rifle and mitrailleuse fire that the two companies in the second line, formed as a half battalion, lost one-third (8 officers and 185 men) of its strength in a few moments and retired to the churchyard close by. The first line, however, in spite of severe losses, continued its advance and took Flavigny and Pappelwäldchen; these two companies lost 43 killed and 116 wounded, the total loss of the battalion amounting to 14 officers and 404 men.

CHAPTER IX.

OPERATIONS OF LORD METHUEN UP TO DECEMBER 8TH.

The Boer successes in Natal had put a stop to the proposed British advance from Cape Colony on Bloemfontein and Pretoria.* Only those troops of the First Army Corps, which were the first to arrive at Cape Town, were landed there, the remainder being sent on to Durban, East London, and Port Elizabeth, on the receipt of the unfavourable news from Natal. In the western theatre of war about 10,000 men from the Orange Free State and Transvaal had begun to move towards the south, along the railway, which leads from Buluwayo to Mafeking, Kimberley, De Aar, and Cape Town. The Boers invested the English garrisons at Mafeking and Kimberley, and destroyed the large railway bridge across the Orange River at Hopetown, but they only despatched small parties across the stream, when they learned that a considerable British force was on the left bank.

The English had been reinforced by troops from India, and about 4,000 men held the important railway junctions of De Aar and Naauwpoort† in the north of Cape Colony, while detachments had been pushed forward to Hopetown‡ on the Orange River, and to Aliwal North and Stormberg§ on the East London Line.

---

* Map 2.

† 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers, 1st Munster Fusiliers, half 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry, and 2,000 volunteers.

‡ Half Loyal North Lancashire.

§ 2nd Berkshire and mounted infantry.

Sir Redvers Buller confided to Lieut.-General Lord Methuen, who commanded the first division, the task of protecting Cape Colony and of relieving Kimberley, which was loudly demanded by public opinion at home. The Brigade of Guards, which had disembarked at Cape Town on November 12th and 13th, was the only portion of Methuen's division at hand, and it was entrained for the Orange River, 600 miles distant. The Highland Brigade of the second division had also landed at Cape Town and was placed under Lord Methuen's orders, but it was kept back at first to guard the long line of communications. Lord Methuen and his Staff preceded the troops and arrived at Orange River Station on November 12th. The officer commanding the 9th Lancers, who were watching the river, informed the general that the enemy was occupying a position at Belmont with 2,000 men and two guns.

Lord Methuen was acquainted with the country on the right bank of the Orange River, having previously taken part in military expeditions there. Before the British troops could reach Kimberley they would have to traverse a large plain covered with short grass and low bush, and intersected by deep river beds, which were often dry during the hot season. Long ridges afford positions favourable for defence, which are difficult to turn, and which, owing to the magnificent field of fire in front of them, can be held against a superior force with good probability of success. Serviceable maps were not available, those in possession of the English officers having been prepared merely for the purposes of land registration, and with no regard whatever to military requirements; they were supplemented by sketches hastily made, which contained the results of the daily reconnaissances.

The baggage train of English troops is inordinately large and requires a great number of draught animals,

but Lord Methuen resolved to reduce his trains to a minimum as, owing to the heat, a scarcity of water was to be apprehended in the plain on the north bank of the Orange River.

The consequence was that the advancing troops were obliged to keep in close touch with the railway, because the country on the right bank afforded only a limited quantity of supplies; therefore the line of communication attained an importance altogether out of proportion to the small force engaged in the operations under Methuen.

The diminished mobility of his troops was bound to impede his operations greatly in face of an adversary, who paid no heed to either baggage or trains; but Methuen's view, after the first fighting had taken place in Natal, was that an attempt to outmanœuvre the enemy from his position promised to be less successful than would be an attack carried out with energy. He did not believe that the Boers would face a hand-to-hand struggle.

The Brigade of Guards had been reinforced by another brigade, the ninth, composed of troops in garrison in Cape Colony, under General Fetherstonhaugh, by two companies of engineers, a Naval Brigade, 400 strong, with 4 naval 12 pr. guns, drawn by oxen. The number of mounted troops was very small. Lord Methuen had at his disposal only the 9th Lancers, about 60 men of the New South Wales Lancers, 150 men of Rimington's Guides and three companies of mounted infantry. Rimington's Guides were serviceable Colonists, enlisted for the duration of the war, and they were attached, as circumstances required, to the Staffs or to the troops. There were, therefore, with the British column only 900 horsemen, a small number for operations on an open plain against an enemy, of whom every man was mounted.

Lord Methuen crossed the frontier with 7,500 men and 16 guns on November 22nd and halted at Belmont,

five miles from the Boer position, on that afternoon. This position was on a ridge about 4,500 yards in length, which rose steeply to a height of about 200 feet from the plain, which was quite level. On this ridge were three knolls which appeared to be very strongly occupied by the enemy. Lord Methuen, rightly appreciating the difficulty of advancing across the plain under the full fire of the adversary, proposed to move his infantry, under cover of the darkness, close enough to the position to be able to storm it at daybreak. The Guards brigade was to advance on the right, while the ninth infantry brigade was to form the left wing. As there were no maps available, it is not surprising that errors arose in estimating the distance from the camp to the enemy's position, and in discovering the proper points of direction in order to carry out the night march. Another mistake was that the Guards were late in moving off, and the ninth brigade also seems to have got in touch with the enemy considerably later than had been intended. It was daylight when the Guards were first fired upon at a range of about 900 yards; they were already deployed for attack, with two battalions in the first line and two in the second, while the distance between each man in the firing line was five paces. The supports reinforced the latter, the companies in reserve likewise were extended, and the whole force, advancing by long rushes and with but short pauses to take breath, endeavoured to reach the dead ground at the foot of the ridge. Taking advantage of this cover the Guards formed up for assault, and their determined charge drove back the Boers. By this time the ninth infantry brigade had come into action on the left, and the fight was over at 7.30 a.m., after having lasted only four and a-half hours. The infantry were too fatigued to be able to pursue the mounted adversary, and, indeed, this would have been hopeless in any case;

nor could the artillery follow him up, as the teams had not yet recovered from the effects of the long sea voyage. The cavalry pursuit was soon stopped by a fresh body of 800 Boers with two guns, who appeared on the scene and covered the retreat of the defenders.

The British loss was very small, and amounted to 4 officers and 71 men killed, and 21 officers and 270 men wounded, in other words a loss of about 5 per cent. of the infantry, while that of the Boers was about 100 men.

Lord Methuen continued his advance on the following day and defeated a hostile detachment at Graspan on November 25th. While that portion of the enemy, which had been defeated, was retiring with Cronje along the railway, other Boer detachments of considerable strength appeared on the flanks of the English. Lord Methuen thought he was not far wrong in estimating the force of the enemy in his immediate neighbourhood at 8,000 men and 8 guns.

The Boer commander did not propose to harass the British during the next few days, but to collect a considerable force on the Modder River, and he destroyed the large railway bridge across it on November 27th. The Boers now changed their tactics; hitherto they had occupied the summits of the ridges which were, as a rule, difficult to climb, but on this occasion they ensconced themselves near the river in low-lying ground, which was on a level with the plain in front. They were thus less exposed to the British shrapnel, which they dreaded above all things, than they would have been if on high ground standing out clearly against the sky. It was also more difficult for the English general to ascertain their position, while at the same time they could pour in a far more effective fire than was possible from the steep eminences, at the foot of which there was almost always a dead angle.

Lord Methuen's force, harassed by Boer detachments

on its flanks, resumed its advance on November 27th with the intention of crossing the Modder River on the following day. His patrols were certainly impeded by parties of the enemy ensconced on the south bank; these, by means of their continual fire, prevented the patrols from examining the valley of the stream, and they could only ascertain the presence of a Boer force in the station buildings on the far bank. When the general approached the river in the forenoon of November 28th, he observed some hostile horsemen in movement near the railway station on the opposite bank, and ordered his artillery to take up a position from which to open fire against them. Starting with the assumption that the right bank of the river was occupied by a weak rear-guard, and that, in order to cover the investment of Kimberley, the Boers would only accept battle on the heights of Spytfontein, the British general decided to make a frontal attack. He believed that on the advance of a strong force the enemy's resistance would at once cease. This attack was to be carried out by the Brigade of Guards, which deployed about 2,200 yards from the river and advanced, covered by a thin line of skirmishers along its whole front. With the exception of the Boers at the railway station there was no sign of the enemy, when suddenly the Guards were surprised by a hot infantry fire at about 600 yards range; some of the Boer riflemen had ensconced themselves in bushes and behind mounds of earth on the left bank 1,600 yards in advance of their supposed position near the railway station. The attackers were stopped and firing was kept up by both sides for a long time. It was not until the afternoon that the British firing line, supported by its artillery, was able to reach the south bank of the river, which flows in a deep bed, and there entrench itself, while on the left flank, a detachment succeeded in crossing the river at

7 p.m., when it also found shelter. But no attempts were made to reconnoitre from this direction during the night or to bring more troops across the stream at that point. As happened so often on other occasions, this success was apparently not reported; Lord Methuen, at any rate, did not hear of it. But the Boer commander at once recognised the danger which threatened him; as he did not feel inclined to assume the offensive, and, as several of the Orange Free State Boers, weary of fighting, were returning to their homes, he ordered a retreat in the night, and this was carried out unobserved by the English. The latter first discovered what had happened on the following morning, when no shot was fired from the far bank in reply to the fire of the British batteries. A bridge was quickly thrown and the division crossed the river, which was the last natural obstacle on the road to Kimberley. The construction of a new bridge was commenced near the site of that which had been destroyed, and it was available for use on December 7th. Heliographic communication was opened with Kimberley, the commandant of which reported on December 4th that he had supplies for 40 days, and that he had made sorties on November 25th and 28th on hearing artillery fire towards the south.

The three actions had cost the British 58 officers and 905 men, and hostile detachments, hovering about the flanks, rendered it necessary to despatch strong parties to protect the Line of Communication.* Lord Methuen, therefore, decided to await the arrival of reinforcements and the completion of the new bridge before resuming the offensive.

* The "Scandinavian Corps,' 1,000 men strong, with three guns, had moved from Jacobsdal against Methuen's rear, and destroyed the railway and telegraph at Graspan on December 7th. The lines of communication troops, consisting of two companies of the Northamptonshire regiment, defended themselves until reinforcements arrived. The damage was repaired in ten hours' time.

So far the different battles had shown the great difficulty in the way of purely frontal attacks in a flat region. Nevertheless the British leaders still believed that a frontal attack, resolutely made, would carry the widely extended and weakly held positions of the enemy. The necessity of thorough reconnaissance both before and during a battle had been strikingly exemplified, and the paucity of mounted troops had, in this respect, been severely felt. To enable Lord Methuen to deliver a decisive blow it would be necessary for him to outflank the enemy in such a manner as to render it more difficult for him to escape by flight from an unfavourable position, when a rapid pursuit must turn defeat into disaster.

The Boers had been much shaken by the three successive actions;* they required time to recover from their effects and to turn to account for future operations the experiences they had already gained. From a purely military point of view Lord Methuen would certainly have been well advised had he continued, regardless of the fatigue of his troops and the difficulties of supply, the offensive tactics which had been so successfully inaugurated.

From our present knowledge of all the circumstances such a course would probably have been advantageous to the British. As the English general, however, was unaware of the condition of his adversary, and as the situation at Kimberley permitted further delay, he thought that nothing would be lost by not resuming his advance until his communications should be fully secured, and his troops and horses, which were exhausted by marching and fighting in tropical heat, rested.

* Correspondence between Presidents Krüger and Steyn of November 27th, 1899.

CHAPTER X.

OPERATIONS OF THE BOERS UP TO DECEMBER 10TH.

The Boers commenced their retreat on the evening of November 28th, and, at a council of war which was held, the most varied opinions prevailed as to the future conduct of the campaign. Whereas de la Rey was in favour of retiring towards Kimberley along the railway, Pieter Cronje carried his view at first, namely, to make for Jacobsdal, at which place the Boer ammunition depôts were situated, and to collect reinforcements there. Cronje, influenced by the results of the late actions, does not seem to have considered himself strong enough to stop the enemy's advance by directly barring his way; he wished to abandon the direct route and to threaten the British flank. Hence there was nothing but a few weak parties to prevent the British from marching into Kimberley. But, at Jacobsdal, de la Rey's wish to fight one more battle to the south of Kimberley, since the English were not pursuing from the Modder River, appears to have gained the day. Some Boer detachments crossed the stream on the afternoon of November 29th, and reached the heights of Spytfontein, about 12 miles south of Kimberley, by the morning of November 30th with the intention of making fresh preparations to fight. Curiously enough the Boer laagers were still from 5 to 10 miles to the east of the enemy's probable line of advance, and the ammunition depôts were left at Jacobsdal until December 3rd, when, in con-

sequence of President Steyn's exhortations, they were removed further towards the north. He had betaken himself to the laager south of Kimberley in order to infuse fresh spirit into the depressed Free Staters. It was due to him that reinforcements arrived from all sides to take part in the intended action, and that even the force investing Mafeking was temporarily weakened, with the result that P. Cronje had from 8,000 to 9,000 men and about 12 guns at his disposal. Preparations were at once begun to put the position in a state of defence, Kaffirs being employed for this purpose. Closer examination, however, revealed the fact that the position was deficient in those advantages which had favoured the defence in the earlier battles. De la Rey pointed out that the heights of Magersfontein in front of it would favour the attacker by affording him commanding artillery positions, which would greatly facilitate a frontal attack. It was better to occupy the heights of Magersfontein themselves, as the British would then be compelled to advance across the open country where there were no favourable situations for their guns. Cronje, at first, paid no heed to de la Rey's representations, but, as President Steyn and the Council of War both strongly supported them, Cronje eventually yielded against his own wish. The position in question* was situated on both sides of the railway, on a level with Merton Siding; it extended westwards to a distance of nearly three miles as far as Langeberg farm, and ended, for the time being, to the east of the line at Magersfontein Hill, which rose abruptly from the plain and was visible for miles around. Whether the attackers advanced to the west of the hill along the railway, or to the east of it along the Modder River Station—Kimberley Road, they would be equally exposed to fire from this position.

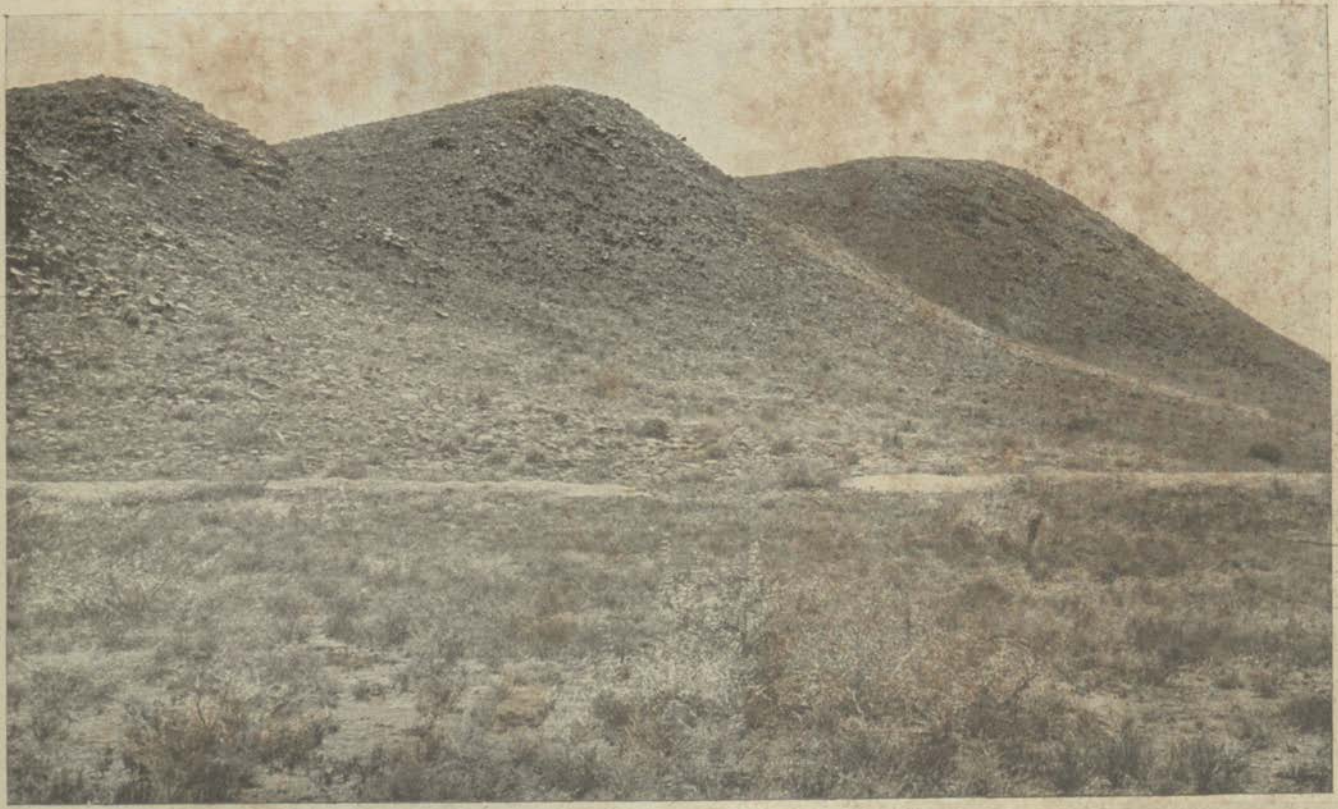
* Map 7.

De la Rey had, doubtless, already perceived the importance of a certain low ridge which extended in the form of an arc from Magersfontein Hill towards the Modder River, and whence it was possible to bring an effective flanking fire to bear on a frontal advance of the enemy. A wire fence denoted the boundary between the Orange Free State and Griqualand West, and was situated more or less parallel to the ridge in question. Another wire fence extended from a point on the railway, about 2,800 yards north of Merton Siding, towards its southern extremity, while to the west of it both fences crossed one another in front of the proposed position.

The ground rises gently from the river towards the north, and numerous low eminences and ant hills, which were about 3 feet high, afforded but little cover. A small hill, situated between the Boer position and the river, caught the eye on the British side, and Lord Methuen intended to station himself there during the forthcoming battle. To the north of this eminence, known as "Headquarter Hill," there was a long strip of bush, about 50 yards wide, situated some 1,600 yards from the Boer position; midway between this strip and the Boers there was another and narrower one of thorny mimosa bush to the west of the road leading from Modder River Station to Kimberley.

The Boers moved forward to the heights of Magersfontein on December 4th, and at once began to construct shelter trenches. The value of the experience gained by de la Rey at Modder River was now apparent. In addition to some rifle pits and gun epaulments the actual fighting positions were from 150 to 200 yards in front of these,* at the foot of the hills, in order to sweep the ground in front and, at the same time, protect the men as much as possible from the fire of the British. Just as,

* See the photographs.



THE HEIGHTS OF MAGERSFONTEIN. [*To face p.* 88.

[The bright streak at the foot of the heights denotes the Boer shelter trench.]

at Modder River Station on November 28th, some mounted Boers had attracted the attention of the English and caused them to overlook the positions occupied in front, so also, on this occasion, apparently by Cronje's orders, were the upper shelter trenches held by Boers, who were to keep the reconnoitring patrols of the English at a distance by means of their Martini-Henry rifles, with which black powder was used.

Instead of being in one continuous line the shelter trenches were placed in groups to suit the conformation of the ground, and so as to be able mutually to flank one another. Their profile was such that their occupants were protected to the utmost possible extent against shrapnel fire. The nature of the soil permitted the interior and exterior slopes to be nearly perpendicular, and, by hollowing out the former, still better cover was obtained. The parapets were kept as low as possible and covered with brushwood and stones in places, so that the trenches were only visible a very short distance away.

By December 8th the Boers had occupied a line six miles long with groups of riflemen. Their right wing was thrown well back and extended from Langeberg Farm to the railway north of Merton Siding; then came a gap, nearly two miles in length; it was watched only by some isolated parties, and reached to the fortifications on Magersfontein Hill, which were about 4,000 yards in extent. Nothing was done to fortify the left wing between the Modder River Station—Kimberley Road, and the river until December 10th. This section of the position was so long that not much cover had been provided up to the morning of December 11th, and, as the right wing was then still further extended, the whole position was nearly 12 miles in length, so that only portions of it could be held.

The British outposts had observed the alterations in

the dispositions of the enemy, and also the commencement of extensive field works at Magersfontein. Cavalry patrols had advanced towards the Boer position, but had not gathered any exact information as to how it was occupied, nor do they seem even to have ascertained the extent of the enemy's right wing. The estimated strength of the Boers varied between 5,000 and 18,000 men, and the reports that the patrols had been fired at from this or from that kopje were not of a nature to re-assure the British general. In order to obtain more accurate information and to startle the Boers out of their fancied security it would have been absolutely indispensable to make a reconnaissance in force, but Lord Methuen thought he could still afford to wait. He called up reinforcements, increased his supplies of food and ammunition, and resolved to delay his further advance until the last available battalion of infantry should have arrived.

In addition to his original force and Rimington's Guides, the latter now increased to 400 men, Lord Methuen had at his disposal the Highland Brigade of the second division, a company of mounted infantry, the 12th Lancers, G Battery Royal Horse Artillery, a howitzer battery of 4 guns, a 4·7-inch naval gun, and a balloon detachment. The troops on the Lines of Communication consisted of one battalion from each of the Cornwall and Shropshire Light Infantry Regiments on the Orange River; at Belmont and at Enslin respectively there was a battalion of the Canadian and of the Australian contingents. Reinforcements arrived on December 10th in the shape of the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders,* which had been previously allotted to General Gatacre, and had disembarked at East London on December 3rd, but was then placed under Lord Methuen's orders.

* According to the Order of Battle it formed part of the Lines of Communication troops.

In consequence of this re-distribution of the British army, Lord Methuen's force consisted of 12½ battalions, about 5 companies of mounted infantry, which were, however, comprised in the establishments of their respective battalions, 400 men of Rimington's Guides, 6 squadrons, 4 6-gun batteries, 1 4-gun howitzer battery, a naval brigade, 350 strong in spite of its former losses, with 4 naval 12 prs., and 1 naval 4·7-inch gun, 2 companies of engineers, and a balloon detachment.*

The fighting strength of this force was 10,200 rifles, 800 sabres, and 33 guns.

In order to relieve Kimberley, which was the task imposed upon him, the difficulty of supply compelled Lord Methuen to remain within reach of the railway. Scarcity of water forbade an advance to the west of the line, and the idea of making a dash at the enemy's ammunition stores at Jacobsdal was abandoned, as this movement would have necessitated again crossing the Modder River in front of the Boers. The plan would have been advantageous had it been carried out during the period wasted on the Modder River, whereas now it would merely have been a blow in the air, productive of delay, especially after the enemy had evacuated Jacobsdal. Lord Methuen, therefore, finally resolved to make a direct frontal attack on the strongly posted enemy in front of him.

This could, however, only succeed if it should partake of the nature of a surprise by crossing the open plain, which afforded a clear field of fire to the Boers, under cover of darkness, before they should have time to arrive from their more distant laagers and occupy the position.

On December 9th the 4·7-inch naval gun was brought into action, escorted by the naval brigade, to the west

* Appendix III.

of a ganger's hut and opened fire at a range of 6,300 yards against the heights of Magersfontein. An attempt made by the cavalry to cross the Modder River at Voetpad's Drift and Moss Drift was repulsed by the fire of strong hostile detachments, but, instead of making a longer circuit, or of forcing a passage with the help of the ninth infantry brigade, which was in readiness on the right bank, the cavalry contented itself with ascertaining the fact that the Boers had occupied the opposite bank with riflemen. Lord Methuen, after the heavy gun had fired about 20 lyddite shells, ordered the fire to cease, as the enemy at Magersfontein had neither shown any troops nor replied with his own guns.

It was then decided to make a reconnaissance on a larger scale on December 10th, so that infantry might approach the Boers under cover of artillery fire. The 1st Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers and the 2nd Battalion of the Northamptonshire Regiment, both of which formed part of the ninth infantry brigade, were pushed forward, under command of their brigadier, on both sides of the railway beyond the ganger's hut. The Highland brigade moved at 3.30 p.m. on to Headquarter Hill, where it formed for attack, the battalion of the Black Watch advancing in widely extended lines of skirmishers to within about 1,600 yards of the enemy, who, however, in no way molested these movements. Some of the mounted infantry were occupying ground on the right wing, a few hundred yards in advance of the Highlanders, while some squadrons accompanied the Black Watch, but they also failed to draw the Boer fire. Here and there isolated shots were, it is true, fired at advancing patrols, but the enemy was careful not to offer a large target or to show a gun. Under cover of this weak infantry demonstration, which was incapable of frightening the Boers into the belief that a serious attack was imminent, the heavy naval



BOER SHELTER TRENCH AT MAGERSFONTEIN.

[*To face p.* 92.

gun again took up its position of the day before, the howitzer battery came into action to the west of Headquarter Hill and nearly 4,000 yards from Magersfontein Hill, and the three field batteries took up position some 1,300 yards nearer to the enemy. The remaining naval guns and the horse artillery battery were not made use of.

When the batteries reported at 4.30 p.m. that they were ready, the infantry in front was withdrawn, and there was then obviously no necessity, even had it ever existed, for the Boers to occupy their shelter trenches. The British guns directed their fire against Magersfontein Hill, which was plainly visible and was soon enveloped in thick clouds of smoke, while the fragments of rock, scattered high into the air by the lyddite shells, confirmed Lord Methuen in his belief that no human being could remain on the hill, and that the enemy must, in any case, be greatly shaken. As a matter of fact the impression made upon the Boers was exceedingly trifling, as the British guns had made excellent practice against the summits of the kopjes, but had only fired incidentally at the shelter trenches, which lay at their foot; the Boers are said to have lost only three men. Lord Methuen ordered the "Cease Fire" to be sounded at 6.30 p.m.; the Highland Brigade, the artillery, and the cavalry bivouacked on Headquarter Hill, the 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders furnishing the outposts, but no infantry reconnoitring parties appear to have been sent out.

After this bombardment it was evident to the Boers that an attack was imminent; the firing had scarcely ceased when Cronje, who had been in the laager at Brown's Drift, hastened to Magersfontein in order to issue the necessary orders for the impending battle. Standing on the kopjes, which were either strewn with splinters

and shrapnel bullets or had been thoroughly searched by the lyddite projectiles, he could see plainly the dispositions of his adversary; infantry, artillery, and cavalry lay before him in bivouac behind Headquarter Hill, infantry was on both sides of the railway to the north of the ganger's hut, and, as dusk set in, he perceived a column of infantry crossing the Modder River. There was no longer any room for doubt; Cronje at once issued the necessary instructions, and Major Albrecht, who was at Jacobsdal with the Jacobsdal and Fauresmith Commandos and a Krupp gun, was ordered to move against the British camp on the left bank of the Modder River on the following morning.

The Boers seem to have occupied their position early on the morning of December 11th much in the following manner: On the right were about 2,000 men of the Klerksdorp Commando and part of the Potchefstroom Commando under the orders of Cronje's brother; the Bloemfontein and Hopstad levies, with the main body of the Potchefstroom Commando, 2,500 men in all, occupied the trenches at the foot of Magersfontein Hill. The Ladybrand, Ficksburg, Senekal, Heilbronn, Kroonstad, Lichtenberg, Wolmaranstad, and Bloemhof Commandos, 4,000 strong, of whom, however, only half took part in the battle, formed the left wing under de la Rey. There was a gap about 1,100 yards wide between the centre and the left, and in it was posted the Scandinavian Corps, which was still 50 or 60 men strong. North of the Modder River there were 10 guns, 5 of them pom-poms, available, and, of these, 2 pom-poms were placed on Magersfontein Hill, 5 field guns were divided between as many favourable points, and 3 pom-poms were allotted to the left flank.

Cronje spent the short interval, which remained after he had issued his instructions, in bivouac with his small Staff on Magersfontein Hill, and about 1 a.m. he went

towards the left wing to make certain once more that his orders had been executed. But he lost his way in the darkness and wandered about until, at 4 a.m., just at daybreak, he found himself between Magersfontein Hill and the road to Kimberley.

Owing to his very scanty knowledge concerning the strength and position of the enemy, and believing also that the short-lived bombardment had sufficiently shaken him, Lord Methuen resolved to attack the Boer centre early on the morning of December 11th. He had no information whatever as to the extent of the enemy's flanks, but, while the artillery had been firing, he explained his plans to his subordinates on Headquarter Hill. The actual attack was to be carried out by the Highland Brigade, under General Wauchope. The brigade was to leave its bivouac at 12.30 a.m., and, arriving in front of the Boer position at daybreak, was to advance in widely extended order and carry it by storm. The Guards were to form the immediate reserve and were to march in the darkness to the Highland bivouac ground, which, however, was about 4,000 yards distant from the probable scene of action. The cavalry and mounted infantry were to move off at day-break and cover the right flank of the Highland advance; as regards the artillery it was to be in the positions occupied on the previous day and ready for action at the same hour. Lord Methuen intended to conduct the action from Headquarter Hill, where the balloon detachment was also to be stationed. The ninth brigade, under Major-General Pole-Carew, and the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, which only arrived by train on the morning of the battle, were to form the general reserve. Of these four and a-half battalions, however, the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers and the 1st Northamptonshire had already been pushed forward along the railway under Pole-Carew in order to draw the

attention of the Boers, but they were not to become seriously engaged. The 2nd Battalion of the Yorkshire Light Infantry held the passage at Voetpad's Drift, and the half battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, together with the naval brigade, remained as baggage escort at Modder River Station on the right bank. Lord Methuen's reserve, therefore, consisted merely of a single battalion and two companies of engineers, for the Guards had been told off for the immediate support of General Wauchope. It had been forbidden to light camp fires during the night in order not to betray to the enemy the intended assembly of troops on the right bank of the Modder River, and the British had, therefore, to go into an action, the duration of which it was impossible to foretell, with uncooked rations and without having partaken of a hot meal.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

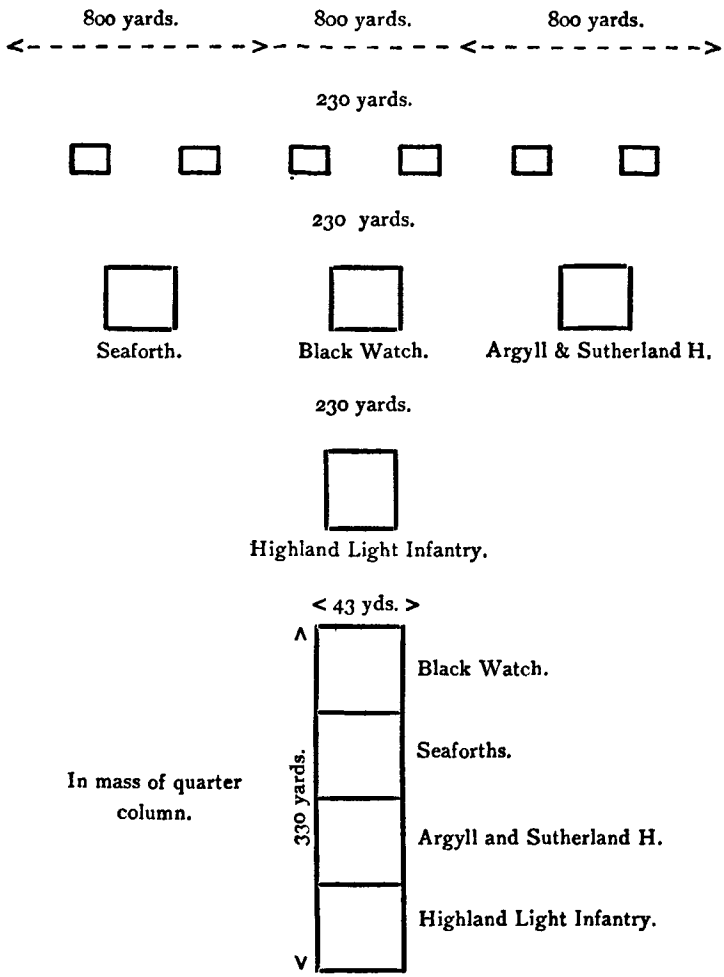
CHAPTER XI.

THE BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN.*

At 12.30 a.m. on December 11th the Scottish battalions, covered by the outposts of the 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders, were ready to advance, and their officers having laid aside the national claymore were armed with rifles. General Wauchope intended to lead his brigade, guided by Major Benson, R.A., who had already fixed the bearing of the line of advance during daylight, in quarter-column close up to the south-eastern extremity of Magersfontein Hill, to deploy there and to assault at daybreak. The quarter-column formation in which the battalions marched, with six paces interval between companies, is a decidedly awkward one; the Black Watch, which was acquainted with the ground from the previous day, led, followed by the Seaforth Highlanders, who were to assemble after the former should have passed through the outpost line; then came the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and, lastly, the Highland Light Infantry. In order that the column should retain its formation an order had been issued directing the non-commissioned officers acting as left "guides" to be connected with cords, but it was only carried out by two of the battalions. If the distances had been accurately kept, the brigade would have had a depth of about 330 yards and a front of 43 yards. No officers were mounted and the machine guns were apparently drawn by hand. The brigadier together with his aide-de-camp, his orderly officer, and Major Benson, who was accompanied also by two men who knew the ground, were on the left flank of the leading company of the Black Watch.

* Map 7 and Appendix III.

Proposed formation of the Highland Brigade on the morning of December 11th, 1899.



Wauchope's orders for the attack were as follows: The Black Watch was to halt close in front of the enemy's position; the second battalion was to form on its left and the third to the right of it, while the Highland Light

Infantry was to follow in reserve. Each of the battalions in the first line was to extend two companies with five paces interval between each man, two more companies were to follow as supports to their corresponding companies in the firing line, and four companies in each battalion was to form the battalion reserve. After forming for attack the men composing the firing line were to lie down, fix bayonets, and storm the position at daybreak. It would have required at least a quarter of an hour to complete these preparations, and the brigade would have had a front of some 2,400 yards, while the leading companies would have had to advance not less than 650 yards, for the brigade to acquire the appointed depth.

It was quite dark when the brigade moved off at 12.30 a.m., and the rain, which had been falling continuously since the afternoon, was coming down more heavily than ever, so that, while the difficulty in recognising objects had been increased, the transmission of sound was considerably deadened. Two rifle shots, carelessly fired as the brigade was moving off, could scarcely have been heard by the enemy, and a violent thunderstorm, which burst soon after 1 a.m., rendered the chance of surprising the enemy still more favourable. Although these conditions tended to conceal the movement, the strain on the men was, on the other hand, considerably increased owing to the ground being soaked by the rain. It was also necessary to pass through some mimosa scrub, about a yard in height, and this was very inconvenient for the leading battalions, clothed as they were in kilts. The distance of two and a-half miles, which separated the brigade from the Boers, could have been traversed in an hour and a-half, but, as soon as the outpost line had been crossed, a halt was necessary in order to give the Seaforths time to assemble and to take their place

in the column, after which the march was continued in a direction more or less parallel to the Kimberley road. Fresh halts, however, had to be made to enable the brigade to keep together. The rain ceased towards three o'clock, and Major Benson twice proposed to General Wauchope to halt and deploy. But the latter refused, partly because he thought he was considerably further away from the enemy than did his guide, and partly because it would have been impossible to advance any distance in proper order if the brigade were once deployed. At last he gave the order to form for attack about 3.45 a.m., when day had begun to break and the outlines of Magersfontein Hill were visible. Just at that moment, however, the leading companies came upon some prickly undergrowth, which could not, apparently, be turned without the direction of the march being lost. Wauchope, therefore, cancelled his order so as first to get the entire brigade through the obstacle, but, as it was rapidly becoming light, he may have begun to doubt whether it was possible to deploy unobserved in the dawn, and he, consequently, issued instructions to form for attack before the two rear battalions had quite got through the bush. This caused delay, nor does the movement of the Seaforth Highlanders towards the left appear to have been carried out without noise.

The two leading companies of the Black Watch were then about a quarter of a mile from the enemy's trenches and about 550 yards from his supposed position. They formed for attack, but had scarcely advanced a hundred yards when a hot fire was poured into them. It seemed to come at first from a narrow front, and the Scotsmen did not immediately suffer loss as most of the projectiles passed over their heads; but the brigade, huddled together in a small space, was surprised by the enemy, and its deployment was rendered difficult. The

men of the centre company of the Black Watch pressed forward, lay down and fixed bayonets, and some of those belonging to the battalions in rear also pushed to the front in order to get out of the deep column, which had by this time become an unmanageable mass. The confusion became still greater when some of the Seaforths, ostensibly by order of their commanding officer, endeavoured to place themselves on the right of the Black Watch. Under such circumstances to advance was the only thing to be done; the signal to charge, the sound of the national bag-pipes could alone avert a panic.

Wauchope did not at once discover this solution; a hero in the truest sense of the word, he walked quietly up to the extended companies of the Black Watch, in order to learn the real distance from the Boer trenches, and, no doubt, should it prove to be small, to lead his troops to the charge. He stood erect among his men and, as the enemy's fire was soon prolonged towards the Kimberley Road, he ordered his orderly officer to tell the remaining companies of that battalion to extend the line in that direction. The commanding officer of the battalion thereupon led forward a confused heap of Black Watch, Seaforths and Argylls towards the right.

Three or four minutes had, perhaps, elapsed since the firing had commenced, and the hour was about four o'clock. At close range it was possible for the Boers to distinguish individual soldiers, and the brigade column, from which shots were now being discharged, formed a clear target. The enemy's fire increased in intensity, and General Wauchope appears to have then given the order to charge. A motley heap, consisting of the stoutest-hearted men of the leading battalions, rushed forward. How close they got to the enemy cannot be stated, but General Wauchope, his orderly officer, and the officer commanding the leading bat-

talion were only 150 yards from the Boer trenches when they fell. No one can cast a stone at the brave men, who, in clumsy formation, were helplessly sacrificed at point-blank range to magazine fire, and were then partly dashed back in disorder. It is difficult to form an adequate picture of the battle from the various conflicting accounts; the Seaforth Highlanders, who were still engaged in carrying out their flank movement seem to have come off best; the Boer fire did not hit them at first, and they were able to prolong the firing line to the right and left.

On the right, portions of the Highland Brigade came across the remnant of the Scandinavian Corps, and a fierce struggle ensued, which terminated in favour of the British, 43 of the Scandinavians being, according to Boer accounts, either killed or wounded. This made a gap in the enemy's line, and groups of 3 or 4, or 20 or 30, and even of a 100 men, led by keen subalterns and brave and energetic non-commissioned officers, forced their way into it. It was about 4.20 a.m., and the day was not yet hopelessly lost. The howitzer battery came into action to the west of Headquarter Hill and opened fire at 3,500 yards range, and two field batteries advanced rapidly to within 2,200 yards of the trenches. Their fire at once had marked effect, and the Highlanders cheered the first rounds of the British shrapnel; but some of the groups on the right wing were obliged to stop their advance so as not to be hit by their own bullets. It was only on the extreme right flank which was wheeling round, that about a hundred men were able to advance almost on to the rear of the Magersfontein position. Curiously enough, they came there upon Cronje, who, in the course of his midnight wanderings, had found himself to the north of the position with a small Staff and, when the firing commenced, he was hurrying to Magers-

fontein Hill. The further advance of this detachment was checked by Cronje's companions, and, as British shrapnel were bursting near it, while Boers were moving against its flank and rear, its fate was sealed. The 30 survivors had to lay down their arms.

The British fighting line, which extended for about 3,300 yards, was within from 150 to 650 yards of the trenches, and the officers had collected the greater part of the scattered men and led them forward again, chiefly on the right, so as to oppose the enemy's flanking fire, which was becoming more and more effective there. A Maxim gun on the extreme left wing was able to fire with good effect for about half-an-hour, until the men of the detachment were shot down one after the other. It is in a high degree worthy of recognition that, in the English firing line, attempts were made over and over again to charge the Boer position, but since there was no sort of unity of leadership, and as no supports were following, it was easy for the Boers to repel these isolated attacks. The relative numbers on both sides deserve attention; the Highland Brigade had gone into action about 3,000 strong, and, after allowing for its probable losses and for the men who were scattered about, it still had about 2,200 rifles, and it is estimated that a similar force of Boers were opposed to them. The wet night had been succeeded by a broiling hot day, and it could only be a question of time as to how long the men would be able to hold their ground. The best troops, if unsupported, must, under such circumstances, and after exertions such as these had undergone, give way. The artillery rendered valuable aid to the Highlanders, and the moral effect of the shrapnel bursting close to the trenches was very great. General Babington seized this opportunity to advance with his cavalry, but the wire fencing and, very soon afterwards, enfilade fire from an easterly

direction seem to have withheld him from making an attack, of which the prospects of success were by no means unfavourable. He ordered the 9th Lancers to dismount and advance with their machine gun, while he himself took up later a position with the dismounted 12th Lancers and the battery of horse artillery, whence he could oppose the flanking movement by which the Highlanders were threatened. The horse artillery battery eventually advanced to within less than a thousand yards of the enemy.

The Boer artillery had, so far, not fired a shot. Colonel Hall, the British Brigade Division Commander, must have conjectured that the adversary's guns were in readiness under cover, and as an advance of the batteries in order to support the Highlanders was desirable on moral grounds, he decided to change position. The 18th Field Battery received orders to advance shortly after 6 o'clock, and it unlimbered to the west of the Kimberley road at 1,400 yards range from the trenches; at 7 o'clock it was followed by the 62nd Battery while, to the right of the latter and to the east of the road to Kimberley, the 75th Battery came into action 1,300 yards from the enemy. It was owing to them that the Boer flanking fire became considerably weaker.

The state of affairs on the right wing was still serious, yet by no means hopeless. But while the pressure there on the Highland Brigade had been considerably lessened owing to the initiative of two officers, there was no such support on the British left. Since the afternoon of December 10th, General Pole-Carew, in accordance with the divisional orders, was on the railway with two battalions and Rimington's Guides with instructions to attract the attention of the Boers and to cover the Modder River bridge. These orders were repeated to him early on December 11th before the battle commenced and were

supplemented with directions not to advance too far, but constantly to bear in mind the safety of the camp. The two battalions, of which only a few men were extended in the firing line, had some trifling skirmishing at about 1,000 yards range, but no attempt was made to drive back the enemy, who was visibly diminishing his strength on this wing, although the effect of an infantry advance there might have been very great. Just in front of the British was a small eminence whence it would have been possible to enfilade the enemy, but, towards noon, when the opportunity of seizing it had passed, there came from Methuen a fresh order not to advance in order that his own right might, if necessary, be reinforced.

Lord Methuen watched the further course of the fight from Headquarter Hill. The Highland Brigade had come to a stand-still, and the firing on both sides had slackened considerably. The British commander, however, being about 4,500 yards away from the fighting line, was utterly ignorant of the state of the battalions composing it; all he could see was that the attack of the Highlanders had not been pushed home. He sent an order, before 6 a.m., to the senior field officer of the brigade directing him to maintain his position throughout the day, and the Guards Brigade, which had moved off at 1 a.m. and formed up at the Highland bivouac, received instructions to be ready to cover the right flank of the Highlanders, or to protect, in case of necessity, their retreat or that of the entire division. The idea that an attack might turn the tide of battle seems to have vanished from the minds of the divisional Staff, although more than half the force had not yet been in action. The cavalry advance had caused the firing on the right to become hotter, but this circumstance only induced Methuen to order the Guards to move forward in an easterly direction so as to meet the turning movement by means of a kind of defensive flank.

The battalion of Scots Guards remained on Headquarter Hill, while the two battalions of the Coldstreams, followed by that of the Grenadiers, advanced against the heights occupied by the Boers, and came into action at about 1,000 yards from the enemy between the dismounted men of the 9th Lancers and the battery of horse artillery. The Coldstreams had four companies extended in the firing line, while the remainder of their two battalions followed in rear, and the Grenadiers came last of all. By degrees all the troops of the first line, with the exception of three companies of the 2nd Battalion of the Coldstreams, were brought up to reinforce the firing line, so that the one battalion of Grenadier Guards formed the sole reserve in this part of the battle-field. The brigadier reported that the opposite heights were strongly held, and endeavours on the part of the 9th Lancers to push forward along the river had failed. On the left the firing line of the Guards advanced across the open ground still further in that direction in order to be able to render more effective support to the Highlanders, and the fact that this movement succeeded ought to have demonstrated that the heights were only weakly held by the enemy. It is probable that, in this part of the field, the strength of the forces on either side was, for the time being, equal. The reports of the Boers leave no room whatever for doubting that a resolute attack, properly supported from the river, would have succeeded, and, until reinforcements arrived, it required all the energy of the Boer leaders to keep their men in the half-completed trenches. Cronje, however, then brought up from the right wing a strong detachment of the Potchefstroom Commando to the threatened spot, while men also came hurrying up from their laagers, so that the original defenders were being continually reinforced.

Dismounted men of the cavalry and mounted infantry

were in action on the right of the Guards, and the battalion of the Yorkshire Light Infantry was at Voetpad's Drift still further to the right of the first-named. The commanding officer of this battalion left three companies to cover the ford, and, with the remaining five, prolonged the right wing of the Guards; they did not, however, succeed in driving back a hostile detachment, which was near a house at Moss Drift, and, when Major Albrecht's force from the right bank also struck in, the commanding officer contented himself with holding the ground already won. These five companies on the extreme right rendered it possible to withdraw two dismounted squadrons and a machine gun from the firing line, and to put them again into the fight on the right of the Highlanders and close to the battery of horse artillery.

But the effect of this small reinforcement was trifling; the fire of the Highlanders became weaker and weaker, and every attempt on the part of a man to raise himself was met with a hot fire; even if nobody was hit, this had a very great moral force and increased the feeling of insecurity. It was by moral and not by physical means that the Boers had asserted their superiority, and that the actual effect of their fire was really inconsiderable is shown by the 75th Field Battery having been able apparently to move towards its flank until within about 500 yards of the British guns posted to the west of the road to Kimberley.

The howitzer battery advanced, about 11 a.m., to within 2,400 yards of the enemy, and opened fire on a laager, visible to the west of Magersfontein Hill, and on the horses behind the latter, the captive balloon on Headquarter Hill having ascertained their position. Lord Methuen then ordered the Gordon Highlanders to reinforce, with six companies, the Highland line, which was getting thinner and thinner, while the remaining two companies remained behind to protect the baggage and transport.

Four companies advanced by long rushes in widely extended order across the plain, the other two companies following in support, also in open order; after a short struggle the battalion succeeded in carrying a portion of the Highland line again to the front. But a hot fire from the trenches repulsed this isolated attack, which had been undertaken without sufficient fire preparation, when still nearly 400 yards away, and a weak fire only was then kept up by both Boers and British. Towards 1.30 p.m., however, a fresh party of the enemy succeeded in getting on to the right flank of the Highlanders* unobserved by the Guards' left. The efforts of the officer commanding the Highland Brigade to get into touch with the latter failed, and, as there were no formed bodies of men in rear of the right wing, he decided to withdraw it towards the 75th Battery, but, the instant that the Scotsmen afforded a larger target, the Boer fire became hotter. The centre and left of the brigade also retired, and it appears to have been assumed there that the idea was to retreat from a hopeless situation in which the troops, after the exertions of the night march, had been placed for ten long hours in broiling heat without food or water.

The Highland Brigade retired slowly at first, and its losses do not appear to have been very heavy,† so that the officers endeavoured to disentangle the units, which were mixed up together, and to collect them. Scattered groups, which had ventured too far ahead, remained where they were, under such cover as there was available, until darkness set in. Lord Methuen vainly endeavoured to stop the retirement by sending forward the Scots Guards, but, just as the Highlanders were on the point of falling

* Probably near the spot where the 75th battery had stood.

† According to the testimony of eye-witnesses, the losses during this retreat were greater than when the brigade was surprised. The entire brigade, however, only lost 47 officers and 728 men in killed, wounded and missing during the twelve hours' fight.

in, the Boer guns opened fire. A well aimed shrapnel burst close to a body of men, who had been, almost at that instant, collected, and the sudden outbreak of artillery fire, although its material effect was small, destroyed all semblance of order, and the brigade streamed away, completely disorganised, to the rear of Headquarter Hill, where it was possible again to assemble it. The Gordon Highlanders alone were not panic-stricken, and order had been restored among them when near the batteries, to which they now acted as escort.

With this retreat of the Highland Brigade the battle also died away on the other parts of the field, and the guns and cavalry were withdrawn at dusk. The Guards' Brigade, with the Scots Guards on the left flank, remained near the enemy, and their brigadier endeavoured to persuade Lord Methuen to hold his ground on December 12th in the hope that the Boers would then retire. But Lord Methuen resolved on the representation of the officer commanding the artillery, who drew his attention to the complete lack of ammunition—G Battery alone had fired 1,153 rounds,*—to retreat across the Modder River, General Colvile and the Chief of the Staff alone remonstrating against this decision. By tacit agreement neither side molested the other during the afternoon in burying the dead and collecting the wounded.

Towards noon the battle-field had been evacuated, and it was possible to commence the retreat. This was carried out without difficulty, for, although the Boer guns at once opened fire, no attempt at pursuit was made. The retreating force was headed by the Highland Brigade and the battalions of the ninth brigade on the left wing, together with the 4·7-inch naval gun. These were followed by the field artillery and the Gordons, by the company

* A battery carried 876 rounds.

of engineers with the balloon detachment, and then came the three battalions of the Guards. At Headquarter Hill the howitzer battery took its place in the column, having previously fired one last salvo of lyddite shells against the heights of Magersfontein. The mounted troops, together with G Battery Royal Horse Artillery and the Grenadiers, formed the rear-guard, which arrived in camp at 4 p.m. The baggage, ammunition columns, and train had been already sent off in the night of December 11th-12th to Modder River Station.

Lord Methuen's division had gone into action with 11 out of its 13 battalions, but only 7 of them, numbering, perhaps, inclusive of the mounted troops, 7,300 rifles, of the force actually engaged.† The exact fighting strength division amounted to 23 officers and 149 men killed, 45 officers and 646 men wounded, and 108 men missing, a total of 68 officers and 903 men,* or, in other words, about 7 per cent. of the total strength, or 13 per cent. of the force actually engaged.† The exact fighting strength of the Boers is not known, but they probably had some 6,000 men in action in a well-fortified position, and are said to have lost 250 men killed and wounded, that is to say, less than five per cent. of their number.

* There is a slight misprint in the German figures.—(Trans.)

† Appendix IV.

CHAPTER XII.

Comments on the Battle of Magersfontein.

The conduct of the battle of Magersfontein by Lord Methuen was marked by a certain tenacity of purpose, and conscious adherence to views, which he had formed in the course of his long career, until the failure of his attack convinced him of the difficulty of a purely frontal advance across the great bare plain. Nevertheless, notwithstanding this failure and the undoubted mistakes which he made, it cannot be denied that he was a cautious leader, who planned everything systematically in order to ensure success; he watched the course of the battle without interfering in details, but, when his Highland Brigade was overtaken by disaster, he appears to have acted the part of a mere spectator.

Lord Methuen rightly decided to continue the action, notwithstanding the mishap to the Highlanders, and it was only in the method which he adopted that he was wrong. His subsequent conduct of the battle forms a complete contrast to his original dispositions, which had been carefully planned. The idea of approaching the enemy under cover of the darkness was, considering that the ground was devoid of cover, an excellent one, and an attack was bound to be all the more effective if it should partake of the nature of a surprise. But, when the bombardment of the enemy's position ceased on the evening before the battle, the Boers had time to recover from its impression and to improve their defences; they could no longer be surprised, and were, indeed, certain to have been put on their

guard concerning the British plans. The expectation of an artillery duel was not realised, as the Boer guns did not reply, and the bombardment was of no value even in preparing the way for the attack, because the British infantry had been kept back too far, so that there was nothing to compel the Boers to occupy their trenches and offer themselves as targets to the English shrapnel. The bombardment, therefore, was rather harmful than otherwise, even if it enabled the ranging of the batteries to be accurately carried out. The fact also remains that the whole of the artillery should have been employed in such a manner as to locate the enemy accurately and to pave the way thoroughly for the attack.

From November 29th until December 11th the British cavalry ought, undoubtedly, to have rendered better service, although the great difficulties in the way of reconnaissance must by no means be overlooked. That boundless region, the South African veldt, would, no doubt, be, as a rule, admirably adapted for the movement of large bodies of cavalry, if only it owned no master and were bereft of all cultivation; but circumstances had changed with the immigration of the Boers. Although the latter ploughed but a tiny portion of the land, yet, wherever there is grass, however scanty, it belongs to some farmer and serves as pasture for the great herds of cattle. But it was just this use to which the veldt was put, which caused, perhaps, the greatest difficulty to the cavalry in the shape of wire fencing. The vast districts are divided by wire into smaller pasture grounds, while the roads are similarly enclosed. In addition to these various obstacles there was also at Magersfontein a high fence of barbed wire, which formed the boundary between the Orange Free State and Griqualand West. In consequence of these wire obstacles the movement of considerable bodies of cavalry was rendered almost impossible

in what would otherwise have been, by nature, ideal ground for that arm, because, at the commencement of the campaign, the cavalry had not been provided with wire-cutters, whereas the Boers had numbers of them. Besides this great disadvantage the reconnoitring parties laboured under yet another one, namely, that the veldt is almost destitute of cover with the exception of a few scattered trees or a rare patch of low bush. This latter circumstance, in combination with the long range Mauser in the hands of that fine shot, the Boer, had a still more paralysing effect upon the scouting of the patrols. The Boers saw them a long way off, and, lying in readiness behind a stone or a bush, awaited them, prepared to stop their further approach by means of well-aimed shots.

While, therefore, every allowance must be made for the difficulties which confronted the British reconnoitring parties, stress must, nevertheless, be laid on the fact that they could have done more in the course of 11 days. If no other method had been possible the mounted troops ought to have endeavoured to gain information by dismounting and advancing carbine in hand. We may, indeed, assume that this was quite feasible had advantage been taken of the strips of bush between Magersfontein and the river. The reconnoitring parties cannot, in any case, be absolved from the severe reproach that they failed to report the existence of shelter trenches in front of Magersfontein Hill, the occupation and fortification of the heights to the east of them, and, finally, the number and positions of the enemy's guns. The omission to despatch strong detachments round the Boer flanks partly accounts for this neglect; purely frontal reconnaissance will always give poor results. It is doubtful whether the balloon was sufficiently used during the days preceding the battle, but it rendered good service in the action

itself by locating the position of the Boer horses behind Magersfontein Hill and thereby enabling the howitzer battery to fire at them. Artillery officers, however, ought to have accompanied the cavalry patrols.

The Black Watch had been pushed forward to cover the artillery on the afternoon before the battle, and the battalion thus became acquainted with the ground to be traversed, but no patrols were sent as far as the enemy, nor do any attempts appear to have been made to employ flag-signallers to announce the effect produced by the guns. The battalion was subsequently withdrawn, with the object, it would seem, of not drawing the attention of the Boers to the impending attack. It would have been, undoubtedly, better to have advanced it to within about 900 yards of the hostile position, and to have formed up there later the troops destined to carry out the night attack. The first halt, which was occasioned by the withdrawal of the outposts, could, at any rate, have been avoided, by relieving these in good time by a battalion from the troops in reserve.

Military history shows that when troops destined to carry out a night attack throw themselves down as soon as fired at, it is only by bringing up reinforcements that they can again be induced to advance. Night attacks require formation in depth just as do actions fought by day, although of a different kind, and the British regulations also affirmed this principle, but the Colonial campaigns had caused the necessity for such a formation to be lost sight of. Lord Methuen, basing his orders upon the English regulations concerning the employment of reserves in the attack, kept the Guards, who were intended to support the Highland Brigade, nearly two and a-half miles away from what was to be the decisive point. In the event of failure their help must have arrived too late, and the advantage of being able to cross the dangerous zone

under cover of darkness was lost. Three thousand men, to be supported by 3,850 others in reserve, were to carry out the actual attack on the enemy, who was 6,000 or, perhaps, 7,000 strong. Pole-Carew, with 1,900 troops, was to make a supplemental attack along the railway towards Kimberley, and 1,450 men were employed in minor and unimportant tasks on the field of battle, or else were not in action at all.

If the night attack was to succeed it was bound to be carried out rapidly and in such formation that deployment would have been the very simplest matter when collision with the Boers should occur. The formation adopted, that of mass of quarter-column, was unsuitable for rapid deployment unless a spot had been previously reconnoitred and designated for the brigade to form up for attack, and it would have been better to advance in a line of several columns. The possibility that the attack might fail does not, however, appear for one instant to have entered the minds of Methuen's Staff, and no steps were taken to bring the troops as fresh as possible into action. For more than 12 hours the men had been exposed to pouring rain in an exceptionally cold night; they were forbidden to light fires, in order not to betray their presence to the enemy, whose attention had already been aroused sufficiently concerning the impending attack both by the firing of the artillery and the passage of the Modder River. The fact that the men had had no hot meal either on the evening of December 10th or on the morning of the 11th is still more important, for well-fed troops are far better fitted to undergo the moral and physical exertions incidental to a battle than are those which, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather and insufficiently nourished, are placed in a position in which the very greatest demands will be made upon their endurance. Instead of sur-

prising the enemy, the brigade was itself surprised in the most unfavourable formation.

The idea that such a situation could only be saved by a resolute advance does not appear to have occurred to all the leaders; but it is probable that a general attack would nevertheless have been made had not the brigadier fallen just when he did, and if some considerable time had not elapsed before the next senior officer assumed the command. But as, in the meantime, it had become light, every instant of delay rendered it more difficult to attack. The isolated offensive strokes certainly show the good spirit which animated the troops, but had no influence whatever upon the further course of the battle, while the attempts which were made against the enemy's flanks were so very trifling that the Boers were able to swing round the Highland right with their own left wing, which extended far beyond the former. The gallant brigade clung to its ground just as did our Guards at St. Privat, but, whereas the latter received powerful support from the rear, Lord Methuen either considered that it was not necessary to reinforce the Highlanders immediately with the whole of his force which was still available, or else that it was impossible to do this. The feeling which subsequently possessed the survivors* that they had been sacrificed, may have already become very strong during the battle in the minds of many of the weaker-spirited, but, if all the troops had been thrust forward with energy into the fight, victory might, perhaps, have crowned the effort. As it was, however, the brigade, left entirely to its own resources, exhausted, and exposed to the burning rays of the sun, was bound to fail. No troops so situated would have had any more strength left to resist an unexpected blow. We may well ask whether men

* This gave rise to the fiction that Wauchope had protested against this attack being carried out.

exposed to such physical and moral exertions would be able to repel a determined cavalry charge. It was its moral condition, and not the loss which had been suffered, that rendered it impossible to stop the retirement of the brigade, when carrying out a change of front. The Black Watch and the Seaforths had, it is true, suffered seriously, but the other battalions lost very few men, so that the number of killed and wounded can by no means be accepted as the reason for the retreat.

The situation of the British force could not be improved by employing the Guards as a kind of defensive flank, and their advance very soon came to a standstill. Once again it was a frontal attack which, entirely unsupported by any flanking fire, was repulsed by weak detachments. An attack from the British left would have offered apparently a better prospect of success.

It is to be observed that all the battalions, which came under effective fire during daylight, had widely extended firing lines, while the supports, which followed in second line, also adopted an extended formation in good time. The Gordons, when ordered to reinforce, also formed early for attack and suffered little loss when they strengthened the firing line. They traversed the fire-swept zone at medium ranges by means of long rushes, and the only unfavourable criticism which can be directed against them is that they employed all their strength at too early a period and without absolute necessity, so that they had not a man left in reserve in the event of a reverse. But they bore themselves well, and it was due to unfortunate circumstances and misunderstandings that they became entangled in the second flight of the battalions in the front line.

The Brigade of Guards likewise advanced in suitable formation on a broad front and with sufficient depth, nor does it appear to have suffered much loss, but, in this

case, it must be remembered that the brigade did not get nearer to the enemy than medium range.

The cavalry and mounted infantry were employed solely as infantry, but, much as their support may have been desired in that capacity, it would certainly have been better if the mounted troops, with machine guns and the battery of horse artillery, had been sent to act against the flank and rear of the Boers. Even if their dismounted action were justifiable until the arrival of the Guards, it was no longer so when a sufficient force of infantry had been brought up, and the attempt could still have been made then to operate against the flank and rear of the enemy. This might well have succeeded because the latter had left their horses a long way to their rear.

The batteries came into action singly, and the initiative and resolution of their commanding officers is deserving of all recognition. That the shells had so little effect must be ascribed to the objects fired at, which were well covered and whose position was difficult to ascertain; but it is to be noted that advantage was taken of every favourable opportunity to change position towards the front. The field batteries advanced to within 1,300 yards of the Boers; the horse artillery utilised a forward movement of the Seaforth Highlanders to approach within 1,000 yards of the enemy's position, and, when the Gordons then advanced, the howitzer battery immediately followed their movement.

Special attention has been drawn by almost all English writers to the great quantity of ammunition expended, which amounted to about 1,000 rounds for each battery on an average. But careful consideration shows that this expenditure was not only in no degree large, but was, indeed, remarkably small, and the conclusion is either that the available supply was insufficient, or that there were difficulties in the way of bringing up ammunition to the

batteries. One thousand rounds are only slightly more than a quarter in excess of the ammunition supply of a German battery with its wagons, and are less than the quantity available in each battery if the contents of the light ammunition column be included. For an action which lasted 11 hours this expenditure cannot, therefore, be classed as extraordinary.

The leadership of some of the subordinate commanders, who showed a want of initiative, was not altogether beyond reproach. The acting brigadier of the Highland Brigade also retained the command of his battalion, and, as this was on the extreme Highland right, his presence there rendered the transmission of orders uncommonly difficult. It was due to this that the very important order of the divisional general, that the Highlanders were, come what might, to hold their ground, was not passed on to all the battalions, with the result that the fatal misunderstanding again arose, which led to the second flight of the brigade.

General Colvile, who commanded the Guards, might well have attacked with greater energy on his own responsibility, and this view appears to be justified both by the trifling loss of his brigade, which was only 5½ per cent., as well as by the fact that, in the afternoon, six intact companies were still available. If Colvile, immediately after his arrival on the scene at 7 a.m., had made a resolute attack, he would have perceived very soon that there was only a weak force of the enemy, in unfinished field works, in front of him; he would then, probably, have scored not only a great success himself, but by transmitting this intelligence to Lord Methuen, he would certainly have rendered the latter an important service. The initiative displayed by the officer commanding the Yorkshire Light Infantry deserves recognition; he had been originally charged only with the task of safeguarding the passages across the river

from the camp to Voetpad's Drift, but, when these were seen to be clear of the enemy, the battalion advanced, and five of its companies, which were sent to Moss Drift, did valuable work there.

The splendid services of the Royal Army Medical Corps still remain to be noticed; the officers, non-commissioned officers, and bearers had traversed repeatedly, with the greatest coolness, the fire-swept zone, which was nearly a mile in depth. On December 11th they brought in, partly from the firing line, 500 wounded, dressed their wounds, and brought them down to Modder River station, whence they were evacuated by rail to Cape Town. In some isolated instances wounded men remained unseen in the bush or lay helpless for more than 24 hours close in front of the Boer trenches, but the bearer companies were not to blame on this account, as the wounded in question had either not been noticed or else they were too far removed from help. Nor was it only in the British ranks that these men gave their services, for they did the same when asked by the enemy for aid.

The British loss was not very heavy, except in the case of the Black Watch and the Seaforths, and this is explained chiefly by their isolated attacks and by the fact that men belonging to both these battalions took part in the vain endeavour to push in between the Boer left and centre. All the eye-witnesses are agreed that the heaviest losses occurred during the retreat, during which these two battalions suffered most. The losses of all the remaining units, which took part in the battle, were far smaller; in the case of the Gordons, who were within a quarter of a mile of the enemy, they only amounted to 5½ per cent.; the 1st Battalion of the Coldstreams, which had approached a little nearer to the Boers than the 2nd, lost 8 per cent., and the other battalion 3·3 per cent., while the mounted troops only lost 2 per cent.

The losses at Magersfontein do not allow of any reliable conclusions being drawn as regards the prospects of success of the attacker or the defender in a modern battle, because the circumstances on both sides were too peculiar. The British advanced in a somewhat aimless manner and with no unity of action; a portion only of their force was employed and that by driblets; there was no formation in depth, no reserves, nowhere the firm resolve to conquer somewhere. Without waiting to acquire the superiority in fire the troops were flung against the Boers.

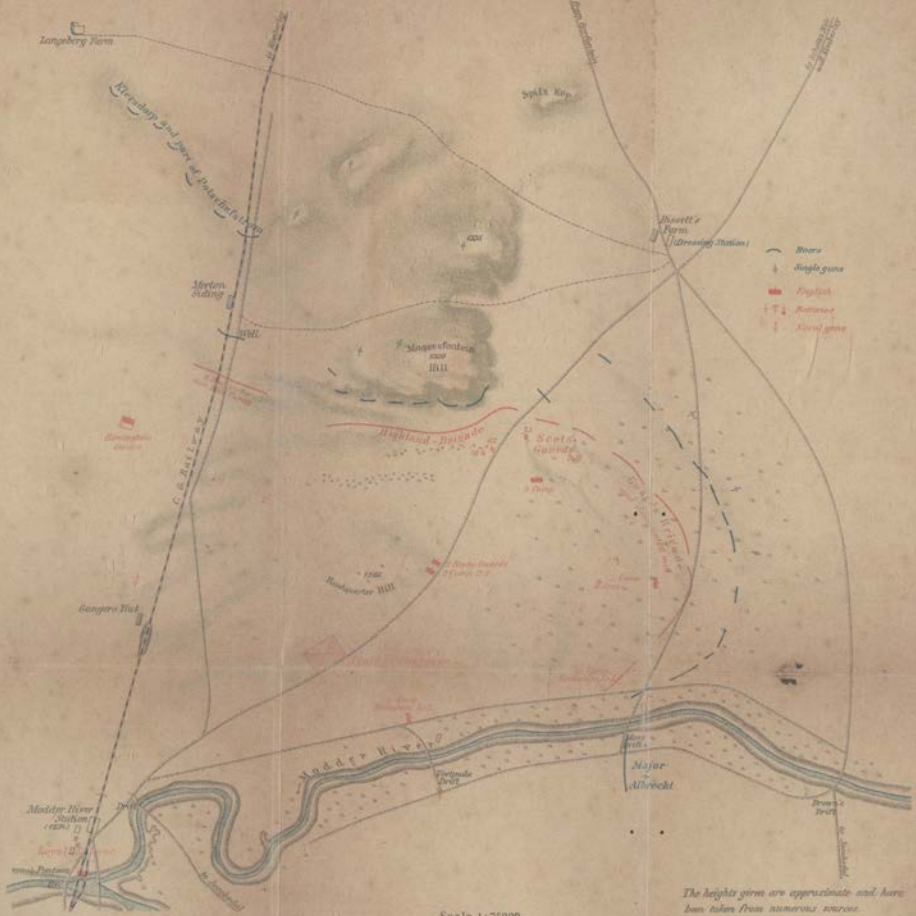
The British soldier was insufficiently trained in fire tactics and musketry, and the general use of volley-firing was bound to give poor results, but the attack was favoured, on the other hand, by the complete silence of the enemy's guns.

Turning now to the Boers, they were quite extraordinarily well fitted for fighting on the defensive; they had had time to strengthen, by means of admirably planned trenches, their position, which was by nature a very strong one, and, in addition to all this, the attacker was complaisant enough to run his head against just the very strongest portion of that position. Their small force of artillery, however, was a great disadvantage for the Boers.

Although the peculiar conditions which prevailed at the battle of Magersfontein prevent any absolute conclusions being deduced from it concerning future European warfare, yet this action seems to prove one thing at any rate, namely, that the pessimistic views, which were expressed after the Boer War, with respect to the difficulty of attacking troops armed with modern fire-arms have been very considerably exaggerated.

Battle of Magersfontein 11. XII. 1899.

Situation about Noon.



PART II.

OPERATIONS IN THE WESTERN THEATRE OF WAR FROM THE ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND BY LORD ROBERTS UNTIL THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ADVANCE ON MODDER RIVER AND THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY.*

Field-Marshal Lord Roberts was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South Africa on December 18th, 1899, with Major-General Lord Kitchener as his Chief of the Staff.

Lord Roberts, who had served in the Indian artillery, was 68 years of age when he was called from the command of the forces in Ireland to his new post of Commander-in-Chief in the field. An excellent horseman, he did not look as if he had passed 41 years in India, and he appeared to be able to undergo any physical fatigue. At the siege of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow, during the Indian Mutiny, he had shown bravery, decision, and endurance. He was transferred as a Captain and Brevet-Major to the British service when the Indian forces were taken over by the Crown, and he commanded a column with great skill in the Afghan war of 1878-1880, when he advanced as far as Kabul. When the British Mission there was murdered, and the warlike tribes again sprang to arms, he collected

* Map 8.

all the forces available, and defeated, with 4,000 men and 18 guns, at Kharasiab, an enemy more than four times his strength and pursued him for 25 miles. It was solely due to his resolution and rapidity in marching from Kabul to Kandahar, when completely cut off from India, that a second and far more serious crisis was averted in the south-east. His victory at Kandahar ended the war.

Although Lord Roberts had not, hitherto, commanded much more than a division, and was not acquainted with the new theatre of war, yet the nation and the army discerned rightly in him a leader equal to the most difficult situations of the South African campaign. His sterling qualities, his firm but pleasant demeanour, his warm heart for even the humblest of his subordinates, and his constant care for the welfare of his troops were universally acknowledged. But, when he had a great object in view, Lord Roberts had not spared the blood of his soldiers, as his victories at Peiwar, Kharasiab, and Kandahar had testified. On this occasion, therefore, both officers and men confidently expected similar brilliant feats of arms.

The Commander-in-Chief was fortunate in having the assistance of Major-General Lord Kitchener, who, although only 49 years old, had attracted universal attention during his numerous Egyptian campaigns, and had proved himself a soldier of rare ability under extremely difficult conditions. He had held the command in the Sudan campaign of 1896-1898, when he crushed the Mahdi by his decisive victory at Omdurman, and recovered the rich Sudan from the Dervishes. He had then shown himself to be not only a very capable general, but also an organiser of extraordinary ability.

He was at this time one of the most remarkable officers in the British army. His personality was extremely soldier-like; he was very independent and reserved, and

disliked asking the advice of others. Nevertheless, he has a deep appreciation for everything really great and lofty, but, although deliberate as a rule, he can, on occasion, become impulsive, and allow himself to be carried away by his temperament.

Both men share the feeling of real enthusiasm for the might and greatness of their country, for which they would sacrifice anything. They have but one military ambition, namely, to see England progress along the path of glory and power.

The army was in high spirits on learning that these two men were placed at its head; the knowledge that the conduct of the future operations had been confided to their proved and skilful hands, strengthened to a most remarkable extent the drooping self-confidence of officers and men.

When Lord Roberts reached Cape Town, on January 10th, 1900, the situation was not very favourable for the English, for their forces were divided into four separate groups on a front of nearly 500 miles.*

The attempts made by the two principal bodies† in Natal and on the Modder River, to relieve Ladysmith and Kimberley had not been successful, and the troops which had made them were, for the time being, in their camps at Frere and on the Modder River. It was only with difficulty that the weak forces in the centre, under French at Rensburg and Gatacre at Sterkstroom, were able to check the Boer Commandos which had invaded the north of Cape Colony, and to stem the swelling tide of rebellion there. The withdrawal of the British from Naauwpoort and Stormberg Junction, at the beginning of November, 1899, by order of General Buller, had shown itself to be all the more disastrous, because the

* Map 2. † See Appendix I. for distribution and strength.

premature and unnecessary abandonment of these important railway centres had cut off communication between the eastern and western portions of Cape Colony. General French was, indeed, able later to re-occupy Naauwpoort, and to pave the way for the recapture of Colesberg, but Gatacre, after Stormberg, had to remain altogether on the defensive. That the English were spared further heavy defeats, and that the movement of rebellion in Cape Colony did not assume greater dimensions, was due solely to the leadership of the Boers, which lacked both resolution and unity of command. How many Boers were still in the field is not exactly known; when the war began they had about 40,000 men and 100 guns.

The new Commander-in-Chief considered that the first thing to be done was to improve the internal organisation of his army by making good a number of defects which had contributed to the want of success hitherto experienced. It was especially necessary to reorganise the train, and thereby render the troops more independent of the railways, and more mobile for operations on a large scale.* The scarcity of cavalry was also a great defect in the British organisation.

As the Boers were mounted, and, very mobile, the want of a large mounted force, accompanied by horse artillery, had been greatly felt, in order to fight the enemy with his own weapons, and it was, therefore, resolved to form a large body of cavalry by collecting some of the regiments hitherto divided among the different groups of the army, and to raise a strong body of mounted infantry. In addition to the two regiments of mounted infantry, which had been sent with Buller's force to Africa in November, six new ones were formed. Every infantry battalion, destined to take part in the operations under Lord Roberts, had to raise a company

* See Appendix VIII. for full account of transport organisation.

of mounted infantry, composed, as far as possible, of soldiers who could ride; this measure deprived the battalions of many of their best men, well adapted in difficult situations to stiffen the weaker elements. A regiment of mounted infantry consisted of four companies, while four regiments formed a brigade. Colonel Hannay commanded the first, and Colonel Ridley the second brigade. The rapidity with which the new organisation was carried out, and the early commencement of the operations rendered it impossible to give any preliminary training to the newly formed mounted infantry, and this accounts for the fact that it rendered very little service at times when the advance began, but, later on, it became a most efficient and valuable force.

Lord Roberts also decided to organise a strong body of Colonial troops, and to make more use of Cape Colony to strengthen his army. Brabant's Horse was increased, and Colonel Brabant was sent to Dordrecht with 3,000 mounted Colonials,* at the end of January, charged with the task of guarding the eastern portion of Cape Colony in conjunction with Gatacre's force. Two other regiments of mounted infantry, namely, "Roberts' Horse" and "Kitchener's Horse," were also formed of men who had been attracted to South Africa by the war from all parts of the world, while the endeavours of influential individuals in Cape Colony to raise fresh troops were supported in every possible manner, Nesbitt's Horse and other units being thus organised. The strength of these volunteer corps varied continuously throughout the war.

In order to prepare the force better for the impending military operations, both the Headquarter Staff and the divisional generals issued instructions on tactics, adminis-

* Two regiments of Brabant's Horse and the Kaffrarian Rifles.

tration, and discipline, which were based upon the experience hitherto gained; the general orders from Headquarters, dated January 26th and February 5th, 1900, and the instructions issued by Lieut.-General Kelly-Kenny, who commanded the sixth division, are noteworthy.*

The one aim and object of all these measures of the Commander-in-Chief was to enable the army to take the offensive on a large scale, and to carry the war as soon as possible into the enemy's country, in order to regain the initiative, as, otherwise, no improvement in the military situation was to be hoped for. Bloemfontein was to be, in the first instance, the objective of this offensive. By threatening the capital of the Orange Free State it was hoped that the Boers would be compelled to abandon the sieges of Ladysmith and Kimberley, in order to protect their own country, while, at the same time, the enemy's forces in the north of Cape Colony would likewise be forced to retreat. It was this which enabled the British forces in that region to cross the Orange River.

Three lines of advance were available for the movement against Bloemfontein;† from Natal across the Tugela, and through Ladysmith; from the central part of Cape Colony, across the Orange River and by Springfontein; and from the western portion of the Colony across the Modder River, on Kimberley. One of the first two lines seemed to promise the most rapid and certain success, for they were the most direct routes to Bloemfontein, and, at the same time, the railways from Durban, East London, and Port Elizabeth were available. The early relief of Ladysmith, or the expulsion of the Boers from the north of Cape Colony, would have checked, in the most effective manner, the further extension of the move-

* See Appendix II. † Map 1.

ment of rebellion, and the communications of the army would thus have been rendered secure; but as only short trains of five or, at the outside, six carriages could run on the Durban Railway, owing to the steep gradients, this line had not enough carrying capacity to supply so large an army sufficiently. Besides, its terminus was at Harrismith, nearly 190 miles from Bloemfontein.

In the event of an advance *viâ* Bethulie and Norval's Pont, along the lines from East London and Port Elizabeth, it was to be expected that the Boers would destroy the railway bridges across the Orange River, which they afterwards actually did. These lines, therefore, from the Orange River to Bloemfontein, would probably have been unavailable for several weeks, which must have necessitated the operations coming to a standstill. Should the advance, however, be made in the west on Kimberley, the Line of Communications would be over 600 miles in length, the offensive action would be weakened, while the rear of the army would be in all the more danger, since the Boers near Colesberg, in the north of Cape Colony, could then threaten the flank and rear of the advancing troops. The Kimberley line of advance would be, to say the least, hazardous, should the Boers display the slightest degree of activity, unless the British should be in undisputed possession of the north of Cape Colony, of the passages across the Orange River, and of the railway to Bloemfontein. The safety of the communications would be, also, in this case, all the more important, because the country, in which the operations would be carried on, was, with the exception of some cattle and grass, destitute of supplies, which would have, therefore, to be brought up from the rear. But the difficulty of doing this would be all the greater, because wheeled transport alone could be used after Modder River Station or from Kimberley, since there was no railway thence to

Bloemfontein. The train, therefore, would require for a distance of over 90 miles from 4,000 to 5,000 teams in order to supply an army of some 40,000 men and 15,000 horses.

Lord Roberts resolved, nevertheless, to advance from the west upon Kimberley, his decision being chiefly due to the fact that the railway as far as Modder River Station, and especially the great bridge across the Orange River, was securely held by the British. The distance to Bloemfontein from Kimberley is much less than that from Bethulie or Harrismith, while Lord Roberts was right in thinking there was little danger to his communications from Boers on his flank owing to the then complete inactivity of the enemy. In war it is of the utmost importance to gauge correctly the adversary, and what he is likely to do in any given case. In this particular instance the configuration of the country appears to have materially influenced the choice of route.

The course of events in Natal had demonstrated that that theatre of war, more than any other, enabled the Boers, although inferior in numbers, to offer a lengthy and successful resistance owing to the peculiar configuration of the country, a difficulty which would also present itself in the event of an advance along the railways from East London and Port Elizabeth upon Stormberg and Middelburg, and thence on Springfontein. To seize the broad and strongly defended section of the Orange River would have been very difficult, because the desolate and hilly region north of the river, especially at Donkerspoort, and the maze of kopjes, which formed a numerous series of positions, were not only of themselves favourable for defence, but would also greatly aid the tactics of the mobile Boers. The country about the Modder River, on the other hand, between Kimberley and Bloemfontein, was very much more open, and, therefore, far less

hazardous for British tactics than the lofty and trackless mountains in Natal and the region about the Orange River. The territory between Kimberley and Bloemfontein is a rolling plain from 3,000 to 5,000 feet above the level of the sea, and is interspersed here and there with small kopjes between 50 and 500 feet in height. The smaller eminences are, as a rule, cone-shaped, while the larger ones are flat-topped, and the slopes are almost invariably very steep and, like the summits, covered with boulders. Owing to the clear atmosphere these hills were admirably adapted for signal stations, and the folds of the ground shared with the kopjes the advantages due to a clear field of fire in that bare region.

The ground was very scantily cultivated, and it was only in the immediate vicinity of the farms that small strips of ploughed land were to be seen while, here and there, were visible some trees near the watercourses, principally eucalyptus, mimosa, and willow. Farms are scarce in this particular district, agriculture being unremunerative owing to the great dryness of the country, and the high wages due to the competition in the labour market of the mines in the neighbourhood. Roads in our sense of the word are to be found only near the towns, there being merely unmetalled tracks between the entrances through the wire fences, which, as a rule, enclose the farms, and are an unpleasant obstacle, especially for cavalry. With these exceptions the veldt is the road, and when troops are on the march a fairly good one is formed of itself in dry weather. When the operations commenced, there had been no rain for several weeks, so that the veldt was, in many places, withered, and did not afford sufficient forage even for the easily satisfied draught oxen. The country to the west of Paardeberg often resembles a sandy desert, but its climate is healthy, the pure and refreshing air of

the highlands counterbalancing the frequent vagaries of the weather, as well as the sharp difference in temperature by day and by night. The troops suffered greatly from the heat by day during February and temperatures ranging from 110 to 122 degrees Fahrenheit were by no means uncommon between the hours of 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Every afternoon heavy, black clouds seemed to promise the long-desired rain, but there came instead only the dreaded dust storms, when the air is so charged with dust and sand that it becomes as dark as during a London fog. The nights were, as a rule, cool, and the hours before sunrise often quite cold. On February 22nd, there were thunderstorms, accompanied by torrents of rain, which caused the streams to overflow, and transformed the veldt into a morass; the rain continued to fall daily until March 7th, but only, as a rule, at night, and this made the bivouacs exceedingly uncomfortable and very cold. Nevertheless the health of the troops remained excellent throughout this period, thanks to the climate which was very healthy in other respects, while the weather changed for the better on March 7th.

In selecting a line of advance the question of water was of first-rate importance, and as the country was singularly dry, military operations and the watercourses were inevitably closely bound together. The route from Kimberley to Bloemfontein lay along the Modder River, which afforded an ample supply of water, and it was only there that the army could be sufficiently supplied in this respect.

These considerations then had determined the Commander-in-Chief to advance through the western portion of Cape Colony *viâ* Kimberley on Bloemfontein. The grounds for his decision were sound, and the course of the operations showed how correctly he had appraised all

the circumstances, and the effect which this advance would exert on the Boers. The troops were assembled accordingly.*

During the month of January reinforcements in the shape of the fifth division, under Lieut.-General Sir Charles Warren, and the sixth division, under Lieut-General Kelly-Kenny, arrived from England; the former joined the force under Sir Redvers Buller, while the latter was sent, at first, to Naauwpoort to strengthen the troops in the centre. The seventh division, under Lieut.-General Tucker, was also expected to arrive at Cape Town towards the end of January.

The intention was to advance on Bloemfontein with the sixth and seventh divisions, the cavalry division about to be formed, and another new infantry division, the ninth, which was composed of the Highland Brigade, taken away from Lord Methuen, and of battalions hitherto employed upon the Lines of Communication; the brigades of this division assembled at Modder River Camp and Graspan respectively. The cavalry division was formed by grouping together all the cavalry regiments, which had been hitherto allotted to the troops in the centre and west, and the infantry divisions also had all their cavalry taken away from them, a measure which was to reveal itself later in the guise of a disastrous error.

In these days of long range fire-arms it is imperatively necessary to attach some cavalry, if only a few men, to each body of infantry, in order to protect the latter from being surprised by fire. General French was appointed to the command of the cavalry division, and he was succeeded at Colesberg by General Clements.

The whole of the force was collected along the railway between the Modder and Orange Rivers during the

* For Strength and Order of Battle see Appendices III., IV., and IX.

first days of February,* the seventh division being despatched direct from Cape Town to Graspan, whereas the sixth division was brought up also by rail some days later *viâ* De Aar to Modder River Camp, where the cavalry division was assembled by February 8th. A portion of the mounted infantry, about 2,000 strong, under Colonel Hannay, was at Orange River Station, and with it were also the 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabineers), under Colonel Porter, who were intended to form part of the cavalry division.

The concentration of the troops was effected with such rapidity that the Boers were ignorant of their movements, and Lord Roberts, in order to mislead the enemy as to his intentions, made a demonstration against their right flank, to strengthen them in the belief that he intended to turn the left of the Magersfontein position.

Partly with this object, and partly to drive off some Boer forces, which were reported between the Riet and Orange Rivers to the west of the railway, and dangerously near to it, a detachment, under General MacDonald, consisting of 8 battalions, 2 squadrons, 1 battery, and 1 company of engineers, moved from Modder River Camp early on February 4th along the Riet River towards Koodoesberg Drift, about 16 miles to the west of Modder River Camp. A hot fight took place on February 6th at Koodoesberg, where the Boers had about 1,200 men. The British lost 2 officers and 40 men, but did not succeed either on that or on the following day, although reinforced by a cavalry brigade, under General Babington, in driving the enemy from his position. The detachment was recalled to Modder River Camp on February 8th by order of the Commander-in-Chief. The resolute but unsuccessful attack of General MacDonald

* Map 8.

was not in accordance with the purely demonstrative object of the enterprise, especially as the Boers had already withdrawn to the north bank of the Riet River on the approach of the British, so that they no longer threatened the railway.

The mounted infantry, under Colonel Hannay, was also ordered at the same time to make a demonstration from Orange River Station in the direction of Fauresmith, so as to attract the attention of the enemy to that place, and to induce him to believe that it was intended to advance by Fauresmith on Bloemfontein.

Lord Roberts arrived at Modder River Camp on February 8th, and the main body of the Boers was then still less then eight miles north of Jacobsdal in position on the heights of Magersfontein, awaiting a fresh frontal attack on the part of the English. Some weak Commandos lay scattered along a front of nearly 20 miles on both sides of the railway, between Koodoesberg Drift and Jacobsdal. The Boer strength was estimated at from 8,000 to 10,000 men, while about 2,000 others, under General Ferreira, were investing Kimberley. The mobility of the Boers had now suffered greatly, owing to the fact that they had gradually collected an enormous quantity of baggage during their long and inactive sojourn in the Magersfontein positions, while numbers of women and children had arrived, so that many Boers were leading a purely family life while on active service. The horses were badly fed, as the veldt had been denuded of grass during the long halt. Military activity fell off, especially where outpost duties and reconnaissance were concerned, and the Boers relied upon the information brought in by Kaffirs, which was, however, remarkably accurate, and was transmitted with extraordinary rapidity.

The first aim of Lord Roberts was the relief of Kimberley, which was also urgently demanded by public opinion in England, so as to acquire a secure base, and

especially the Cape Town, De Aar, Kimberley Railway, for the further advance upon Bloemfontein. But before this could be done, the Boers, under General Cronje, who were covering the siege of Kimberley, had to be reckoned with. It was, therefore, resolved to avoid a renewed attack on the strong Magersfontein position, and, instead, to make a long turning movement with the main body eastward towards Rondavel Drift and Klip Drift, in order to compel the Boers, by threatening their flank and rear, to abandon their strong position, and so to open the road to Kimberley. The first division, under Lord Methuen, was to remain at Modder River Camp in order to veil the movement of the army towards its right.

With the intention of ensuring secrecy no orders were issued; the divisional commanders received sealed instructions daily and personally from Headquarters, but they were kept altogether in the dark concerning the intentions of the Commander-in-Chief, and the objective of the operations. Not even when the Riet River was reached did they know whether the further advance was to be towards the east or towards the north, while, in order still further to deceive the enemy, false intelligence as to the concentration of large forces at Naauwpoort was published in the Cape newspapers, and the tents were left standing in the deserted camps.*

Orders were issued on the evening of February 8th for the first movements of troops. The seventh division and the cavalry division were to reach Ramdam on February 11th, and the mounted infantry at Orange River Station was to assemble at Rodepan, on the same day, on the right of the seventh division. The cavalry division received special instructions to relieve Kimberley promptly. The sixth division was moved by rail from Modder River

* The troops suffered greatly from the bad weather without their tents.

Camp to Enslin on the evening of the 10th, and it remained there until the 12th; the seventh division and the cavalry division reached their destination undisturbed on February 11th, but the mounted infantry, and the Carabineers, under Hannay, had a fight with a weak body of the enemy on their way to Rodepan, in which the British lost 33 killed and wounded besides 23 prisoners. On the same day a strong force of mounted infantry, which had been collected partly at Belmont and partly from the other divisions, joined the cavalry division; it was composed of the 1st and 3rd Regiments of Mounted Infantry, Roberts' Horse, the New Zealand Mounted Infantry, the Queensland Mounted Infantry, and Rimington's Guides. A brigade of mounted infantry was formed from these units under Lieut.-Colonel Alderson, and was attached to the cavalry division for the march on Kimberley.

General French, accompanied by his Staff, had thoroughly reconnoitred the Riet River* on February 11th, with the result that he resolved to cross the river at Waterval Drift on the following day, without waiting for the arrival of the Carabineers, who belonged to his first brigade, or that of Colonel Porter, its brigadier. The cavalry division moved off at 2 a.m. on February 12th, the three brigades moving on a broad front across the veldt, the first on the right, the second in the centre, and the third on the left; the guns were between the brigades, and the mounted infantry was with the first brigade, while Rimington's Guides were charged with the reconnaissance duties.

The patrols reported Waterval Drift as being free from the enemy, but when the division approached the ford, the kopjes on the right bank were occupied by about 500 Boers with two guns, under De Wet, who had been ordered by General Cronje to stop the advance of the

* Map. 8.

English cavalry. General French thereupon ordered the third brigade, under Colonel Gordon, to make a feint against the Drift, whilst he crossed the river with the other two brigades somewhat higher up at De Kiel Drift. Before the Boers became aware of the turning movement, the first brigade and the mounted infantry had already gained the north bank and were advancing against the enemy's left on the kopjes at Waterval Drift. The latter was thus compelled to quit his position, and the third brigade was also enabled to cross at that place. When the division had been again collected, it bivouacked on the north bank towards 1 p.m. near Waterval Drift. The 10th Hussars were sent to Blaauwbank, late in the afternoon, with orders to find watering places for the other troops which were following, and to cut the telegraph between Jacobsdal and Koffyfontein. Nothing was done on this day to reconnoitre towards the Modder River or on the right flank; not one single patrol was sent out, and touch was soon lost with the Boers of the forenoon, an error which was to be cruelly punished some days afterwards. De Wet had retired in the direction of Winter Hoek, where he was watching for an opportunity to fall upon the British rear.

The seventh infantry division likewise reached the right bank of the Riet River at De Kiel Drift towards evening, and bivouacked there. It had marched nearly 16 miles since 7 o'clock in the morning, and the lives of many men had been lost owing to the terrific heat and the great scarcity of water; the 15th brigade alone had 21 deaths, and nearly half the men had fallen out. The division required some days to recover from the march, which had been all the more exhausting because the men had come straight from being on board ship and in the train, and were, therefore, quite out of condition.*

* The 15th brigade had 3,878 men, of whom 2,010 were reservists.

The sixth division, and the mounted infantry, under Hannay, reached Ramdam; the 82nd Battery, which had hitherto belonged to the former, and also the 65th Howitzer Battery, were transferred on the same day to the newly constituted ninth division, of which the nineteenth brigade had remained at Graspan, while the Highland Brigade had gone to Enslin. The Headquarter Staff moved from Modder River Camp to Ramdam, and thence on the following day to De Kiel Drift.

The cavalry division continued its advance in a northerly direction towards the Modder River at 9.30 o'clock on the morning of February 13th, with strict orders to seize the passage across the Modder River under any circumstances on that day, and to occupy Rondavel Drift. The division was also directed to search for watering places for the infantry which was following in rear. The distance to the Modder River was about nineteen miles, and the brigades kept the same order of march as on the preceding day, each brigade being formed in brigade column while the mounted infantry followed with the ammunition columns.

The advance was slightly retarded towards noon owing to the division being completely surprised* by the fire of a small Boer detachment which suddenly appeared on the right flank. It was soon driven off by the fire of

* It has been impossible to ascertain what steps were taken with regard to detailed reconnaissance, or whether any patrols were sent out. At any rate, the scouting was defective, otherwise the division could not have been surprised by a flanking fire. A German, who observed these events from the English side, has criticised the British reconnaissance in the following language: "The aversion to outpost duties and thorough reconnaissance, which may often seem to entail needless exertions on the troops, but which, on the other hand, prevent disaster, is so general among British officers, that one is almost inclined to connect this feeling with the national and ineradicable optimism of their race. It is often openly stated that it is better to get now and then into a really tight place by neglect of these duties, than to have to endure the constant irksomeness which they entail. Yet even with regard to the Boers the luxury of holding these views was frequently a costly one."

some batteries which came rapidly into action, but continued to constantly disturb the right flank of the advance.

When the division had approached within six miles or so of the Modder River by about 4 p.m., it was reported that the enemy was occupying Rondavel Drift, and General French adopted the same tactics as on the previous day. The third brigade made a feint on Rondavel Drift, while the first and second brigades were to cross the river at Klip Drift, but this was also found to be in possession of the Boers. The two brigades, however, succeeded in scattering the enemy, who were in position on the south bank, and who fled across the river in a northerly direction, abandoning their laager with its large supplies, without having made any attempt whatever at resistance. The third brigade also managed to gain the north bank of the Modder River at Rondavel Drift without encountering any serious opposition, and it likewise captured a laager, which had been deserted by the Boers.

Outposts were placed on the heights on the north bank and the division bivouacked in the laagers abandoned by the enemy. The large supplies of food and forage, which were found in them, were all the more welcome, because the troops had not seen their own baggage after marching from Ramdam; with it were carried rations and forage for some days, while on the horses was forage for two days only. On this day the division lost a large number of horses in consequence of the tiring march and the great heat. In the horse artillery alone 59 horses died, while a large number were utterly exhausted; the best animals, therefore, had to be taken away from the ammunition columns in order to horse the guns, and this necessitated leaving the greater portion of the reserve ammunition behind at the Modder River, it being only possible to take a few wagons on to Kimberley.

The field telegraph detachment with the division had endeavoured to effect communication from the Riet to the Modder River, but the line, which was a ground one, had become unserviceable in many places owing to the grass having caught fire. Communication between the cavalry division and army Headquarters was, in consequence, carried on by means of relays of despatch riders posted at Rooidam and Blaauwbosch.

The sixth division reached the north bank of the Riet River at Waterval Drift at noon, and was joined there by Hannay's mounted infantry, which was then placed for the next few days under the orders of Lieut.-General Kelly-Kenny. The Carabineers, who had accompanied the mounted infantry from Orange River Station, now separated from it in order to endeavour to join the cavalry division by way of de Kiel Drift. The ninth division concentrated at Ramdam, and was joined there by the 82nd Field Battery, the 65th Howitzer Battery, and the City Imperial Volunteers, so that it was then complete.

The seventh division remained at de Kiel Drift on February 13th; it had been delayed owing to the fact that its baggage and train had stuck fast in the ford, and could only be brought on to the north bank with great exertions, and after much loss of time. The march of the preceding day had also so exhausted the men that they were in urgent need of rest and care. The cavalry division halted on the Modder on February 14th awaiting the arrival of its train, and of infantry to guard the river.

The division was now complete, having been joined by the Carabineers and a squadron of the 14th Hussars. As regards reconnaissance on the 14th practically nothing was done, ostensibly because the horses were too exhausted, an ever-recurring excuse with which every omission on the part of this arm was palliated throughout the entire campaign. Consequently the British did not learn that

the Boers had abandoned the investment of Kimberley from the south during the night of February 14th-15th.

The sixth division, accompanied by Lord Kitchener, marched by way of Wegdraai Drift, and reached the Modder River at Klip Drift, in the early hours of February 15th; it had traversed about 26 miles in 24 hours, and, considering the great heat, the scarcity of water, and the exertions of the previous days, this performance was all the more remarkable as there were few stragglers. A comparison between the marching of the sixth and seventh divisions at that time shows most graphically the difference between troops in condition and those, which, just fresh from a long journey, have to face considerable exertions. The seventh division followed the sixth, and, making a night march from de Kiel Drift *viâ* Waterval Drift, reached Wegdraai Drift early on February 15th.

The 9th division marched to Waterval Drift on the 14th, crossed the river about noon and bivouacked on the north bank; it was to follow the 7th division to Wegdraai Drift on the 15th. A large supply column, consisting of 200 wagons and a quantity of cattle, likewise reached the north bank at Waterval Drift; their teams had rendered very good service during the crossing of the naval guns, which would, otherwise, have probably remained behind their division. The task of protecting this supply column, which was also to march from Waterval Drift to Wegdraai Drift on the 15th, devolved upon the ninth division,* and two companies of the Gordon Highlanders were told off for the duty; they were joined early on the 15th by three weak companies of mounted infantry under Colonel Ridley, so that the whole escort numbered about 360 rifles.

* When this order was received by the ninth division from Army Headquarters its commander sent to enquire the strength of the escort which he was to provide. In reply, he was informed that 200 men would suffice.

Disposition of the British Forces
in January 1900



General French intended to continue his advance for the relief of Kimberley early on February 15th, in order, if possible, to reach that town on the same evening, but the Boers had blocked the road during the night, a detachment, about 500 strong with three Krupp guns, having occupied the kopjes north of Klip Drift in a semi-circle about two and a-half miles in extent. Somewhere about the centre of the Boer position there was a col from 1,200 to 1,300 yards wide, which connected two neighbouring kopjes, and the ground sloped gently up from the river. This col was within effective range of the Boers ensconced on both the kopjes, the three Krupp guns being on the western hill.

After the sixth division had occupied the position on the heights between the two drifts, where the cavalry had been, the latter assembled about 8.30 a.m. at Klip Drift. The patrols soon succeeded in ascertaining the strength and the extent of the enemy's position, because the Boers, contrary to their usual custom, opened fire on them at long range, and so disclosed their whereabouts. In consequence of the reports sent in, French ordered his seven batteries of horse artillery, which were soon afterwards joined by two batteries of the sixth division, and two 12 pr. naval guns, to come into action on the heights on the north bank. Supported by the fire of his guns, he intended to break through the centre of the enemy's position. The artillery opened fire at about 2,200 yards range, spreading it along the entire Boer position, and it soon succeeded in silencing the three hostile guns. Simultaneously with the opening of the artillery fire, the infantry of the sixth division advanced north of the river against the Boers on the high ground.

The hour was just after 9 a.m. French assembled his three brigadiers, informed them of his intention, and ordered Gordon's Brigade with its two batteries of horse

artillery to form the first line, with 4 yards interval between each man, and to break through across the col. in the direction of Kimberley. The second brigade, under Broadwood, was to follow in support in line at 500 yards distance, while the first brigade, under Porter, together with the remaining five batteries of horse artillery, which were to continue firing until the last possible moment, was to form the third line.

The two leading brigades at once deployed, and the horsemen, who were soon veiled in dense clouds of dust, dashed into the enemy's fire, the divisional general riding at the head of the second brigade. The spectacle displayed to the eyes of the sixth division was magnificent; every man held his breath; the moment was one of the most extreme tension, for it seemed as if the result of the bold attempt must be the utter destruction of the gallant riders. It had, however, already succeeded before the spectators were really able to appreciate the fact. After the dense clouds of dust, caused by the 6,000 horses, had somewhat dispersed, the three brigades were seen to rally nearly a mile beyond the enemy's position, and the road to Kimberley was open. It was marvellous that the division should have ridden almost without loss through the Boer fire; the casualties amounted to only one officer, and 15 men killed and wounded, together with about 20 horses. The first line lost 15 killed and wounded. The remarkably small loss is explained chiefly by the great rapidity of the manœuvre which completely surprised the adversary. The impression caused by the dashing mass of horsemen was such that some of the Boers took to flight before the cavalry had approached within effective rifle range. Those of the enemy, who held their ground, fired for the most part too high in their excitement, especially as they had occupied, contrary to their usual custom, the summit of the heights and not their foot. The cavalry

too were enveloped in such dense clouds of dust that they offered no certain target. The effective preparation, and support of the attack by the artillery contributed also greatly to its success, and one of the Boers present stated that "the fire from the English guns was such that we were scarcely able to shoot at all at the advancing cavalry." The main body of the Boers, leaving 15 killed and wounded, fled towards Magersfontein, and their terror was such that, by their exaggerated accounts, they communicated their dejected spirits to other burghers in laager. A number of Boers, unable to get their horses in time, had surrendered. A British officer described his impressions in the following language:—

"The enterprise appeared to us at first as quite hopeless; we believed that only a few of us would come out of it alive, and, had we made a similar attack at Aldershot, we should certainly have all been put out of action, and have been looked upon as idiots. When we had galloped about a quarter of a mile, we received a very hot frontal and flanking fire, and I looked along the ranks expecting to see the men falling in masses, but I saw no one come down, although the rifle fire was crackling all around us. The feeling was wonderfully exciting, just as in a good run to hounds."

This charge of French's cavalry division was one of the most remarkable phenomena of the war; it was the first and last occasion during the entire campaign that infantry was attacked by so large a body of cavalry, and its staggering success shows that, in future wars, the charge of great masses of cavalry will be by no means a hopeless undertaking even against troops armed with modern rifles, although it must not be forgotten that there is a difference between charging strong infantry in front and breaking through small and isolated groups of skirmishers.

After an hour's repose the division continued its advance on Kimberley about 11.30 a.m., the second brigade marching by Alexandersfontein, and the other two by Olifantsfontein. A squadron was left behind at Abon's Dam, about six miles north-west of Klip Drift, in order to maintain communication with the sixth division. Nothing was done in the way of reconnaissance on the left flank towards Magersfontein, and the flying Boers were not even followed by patrols in order to ascertain where they halted. The brigades encountered no resistance worth mentioning during their further advance; General Ferreira had already abandoned the investment of Kimberley, on the southern and western sides, during the night of February 14th-15th. Some weak Boer detachments with a few guns remained, however, to the north and east of the town at which they continued to fire until the arrival of the cavalry division. Most of the Boers retired towards the north and north-east, but a few went east with Ferreira, so as to aid Cronje. Ferreira died a few days later, when his men dispersed.

French had got into heliographic communication with Kimberley at 2 p.m., and announced its speedy relief. The division reached the town about 6 p.m., and General French rode at its head as the deliverer, being greeted by the plaudits of the inhabitants.

The "four months siege of Kimberley," as puffed up by the newspapers, was rather a pretence than a serious military enterprise. All that the Boers really did was to prevent the importation of food, and to cut off the water supply, which was replaced by filtered water from the mines. The damage done to the town by the "great bombardment" was so small that "one had to look very carefully in order to find any trace of it."*

* Statement of an eye-witness.

The brigades bivouacked, after marching into Kimberley, outside the town; the first and the third to the east of it, and the second to the south of the city. The untiring energy of the cavalry leader was shown by the following order issued to the troops immediately after their entry: "The brigades will be ready in their bivouacs to march at five o'clock in the morning, and will await further orders." General French decided to make use of his success at once by an energetic pursuit of the enemy. Although the material results of the relief of Kimberley were small, owing to the premature and rapid flight of the Boers, it was, nevertheless, of great value in raising the spirits and self-confidence of the troops, and their leaders, throughout the whole British army, which was depressed, and in part disheartened, after so many abortive efforts.

The sixth division remained on the Modder River over February 15th, in order to recover from its very exhausting march of the previous day. In spite of its advanced position no steps whatever were taken to reconnoitre, although means for this purpose, if not altogether adequate, were available in the shape of the strong force of mounted infantry under Colonel Hannay, which was with the division. Reconnaissance was again omitted, ostensibly on account of the complete exhaustion of the horses.

The seventh division was to have remained at Wegdraai Drift, but the fifteenth brigade was despatched about noon, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, to occupy Jacobsdal, which was situated some four miles further to the north. It encountered there a Boer detachment, of about 200 men, which held the heights to the south of and commanding the town, and which was repulsed after a short resistance, the town being occupied by the British about three o'clock in the afternoon. The ninth division, accompanied by the Headquarter Staff, marched early on

the 15th to Wegdraai Drift, where it remained until the 16th; the Headquarters moved on the latter date to Jacobsdal, where Lord Roberts inspected the German Red Cross Hospital attached to the Boer forces. He congratulated the medical officers in charge in unusually flattering terms on their excellent arrangements.

The supply column, escorted by troops from the ninth division, had remained behind at Waterval Drift, and the teams were grazing near it on the river bank, while the drivers were either asleep or at breakfast. The escort had occupied the kopjes to the north-east of and commanding the drift, but no steps whatever had been taken to reconnoitre properly. This enabled a body of 300 or 400 Boers, with a Krupp and Maxim gun, under de Wet, to approach unperceived close to the hills where the escort was, and to open fire suddenly about 9 a.m. The animals stampeded, the drivers took to flight, and the escort defended itself behind the kopjes as well as it could. This was the same detachment of Boers which had opposed French at Waterval Drift three days previously, and the penalty for having then completely lost touch with them was now to be a bitter one. Colonel Ridley telegraphed to Headquarters for immediate reinforcements. Thereupon the fourteenth brigade, and the 18th and 62nd Field Batteries, which had just reached Wegdraai Drift, were ordered to return to Waterval Drift. But these troops only arrived gradually, and were so exhausted by their marching and counter-marching in the great heat, that they were scarcely fit for action, and when General Tucker arrived on the scene towards evening with the rest of the brigade, Colonel Ridley had already been obliged to evacuate his position with the loss of the entire supply column. Although the British had more than four times the numbers of the Boers, no attempt was made to recover the valuable booty, ostensibly because

the approaching darkness, and the complete exhaustion of the men rendered the prospects of success hopeless, notwithstanding the fact that the enemy experienced great difficulty in getting the wagons away. General Tucker had express orders from Lord Roberts not to attempt to recover the train if this would cause much delay, in which case he was to return immediately. The whole brigade retired in the night in the direction of Wegdraai Drift, where it again arrived on the morning of February 16th without serious loss.

The capture of this column which resulted in the loss of 200,000 rations, 48,000 portions of forage, and a quantity of cattle, might have had the most disastrous consequences for the success of the operations, for, besides the valuable means of subsistence for the army, a large portion of the general transport, which had been collected with so much difficulty, and at such expense, was lost. The Headquarter Staff of the army itself was partly to blame for the occurrence, by having laid down the strength of the escort, in response to the inquiry of the officer commanding the ninth division. But the want of initiative, and fear of responsibility, shown by the Staff of that division are also to blame for such a serious incident, because the Headquarter Staff had other and more important matters to think about, and could not supervise affairs on the spot so well as the ninth division. There is no doubt that the best protection for the supply column would have been found in making it march not on the right but on the left bank of the Riet River, especially as the veldt was passable everywhere, owing to the dry weather. If the train had taken this route on the evening of February 14th, then the ninth division, following the right bank early in the morning of February 15th, would itself have formed the escort without any further trouble. The ninth division could properly have taken this simple

step on its own initiative without importuning the Headquarter Staff with a question on the subject. The regrettable step taken by Lord Roberts in depriving the divisions of all their cavalry is also partly to blame for this misfortune; it left them no possibility of reconnoitring, for the mounted infantry was not, especially at first, an efficient substitute. Owing to the loss of the train, with its eight days' supply of food for the army, and that of the 200 wagons and their teams, which were yet far more valuable, it seemed a question whether the whole plan of operations would not have to be abandoned.

Lord Roberts, on hearing of this misfortune, wished, at first, to postpone the further advance, but the rapidity with which he regained his mental equilibrium merits the utmost admiration. He received the brigade on its return not only without one word of reproach, but with friendly expressions of encouragement, and those around him failed altogether to discern in his cheerful demeanour the gravity of the situation. He immediately issued fresh instructions for the issue of supplies; the entire force was placed on half rations, while the first division was ordered to load every cart, that could possibly be procured, with supplies, and to despatch them at once to Jacobsdal. This was done so quickly, that about 100 wagons, carrying supplies for two and a-half days for the whole army, reached that place on February 16th. All the engineer companies handed over their pontoon wagons, with their teams, in order to replace the carts which had been lost, but this measure, which was perhaps a desirable one, entailed disagreeable consequences for the ninth division at Paardeberg, when the pontoons were urgently required for the passage of the Modder River. Thanks to the devoted energy of the officers of the Army Service Corps, who proved themselves fully equal to their task, it thus became possible to carry out the operations without a break.

The army remained on half rations until the end of February, and on three-quarter rations from that time until the entry into Bloemfontein. A very important order was also issued to the effect that, in future, every man should carry two days rations, and a reserve ration, on his person. It was not until Bloemfontein was occupied that it became possible to issue full rations to the troops again, a double ration of meat being then given out in place of other provisions, which were wanting, as there was a sufficient and easily obtainable supply of cattle in the country itself. The horses of the cavalry division suffered most from the reduction in their forage, as they received only 8 pounds of oats instead of the regulation 14 pounds in spite of their altogether exceptional exertions.

Under these very difficult conditions the new Headquarter Staff had proved itself equal to the occasion in every respect, but the incident of February 15th again shows how dependent the operations of an army are on the safety of its communications. It confirms impressively the old lesson of the necessity of always keeping a watchful eye on the rear, however much the attention may be concentrated towards the front. It is impossible ever to study with sufficient care and detail the arrangements for the safety of the Lines of Communication.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PURSUIT OF CRONJE.

The 15th of February was also a day full of significance for the Boers. General Cronje had received the most exact information concerning the British movements, both from his spies and from Commandant de Wet, and he had had accurate intelligence of the advance of the English, and of the disposition of their forces, on the 13th from one of de Wet's despatch riders. The advice of de Wet was that Cronje should evacuate the Magersfontein position, as quickly as possible, with the whole of his force, as his retreat would otherwise be cut off. The undismayed personality, and the faulty discernment of the Boer Commander-in-Chief, are very well depicted by his reply to de Wet's messenger, to whom he exclaimed with an oath: "Are you again possessed by this damnable fear of the English? Come on! Shoot them dead and capture the others when they run away."*

He learned at noon on February 15th from the Boers, who had been driven off by the cavalry at Klip Drift in the morning, that French had broken through, and the terror of these men seems to have made some impression upon him. He hurriedly called a Council of War, in which he himself proposed to retreat along the Modder

* General de Wet: "The struggle between Boer and Briton."

River towards Bloemfontein with all the force in laager, which was from four to five thousand strong with six guns,* without waiting to collect the other Commandos which were scattered over a wide expanse. This plan was adopted, and the retreat commenced at 9 p.m. with women, children, and an immense quantity of baggage, in the direction of Koodoes Rand Drift,† in order to cross the Modder River at that point, and to march thence directly on Bloemfontein. Of all the lines of retreat still open to him this was the most unfavourable one, for it would cause him to march immediately along the front of the British army, which was superior in numbers, and of whose presence and position he had tolerably accurate information. It seems that the desire for an early junction with the Boers in the north of Cape Colony decided the choice of this route, but the water question appears also to have had something to do with it; only the shallow wells on the farms afforded drinkable water, and their number was quite inadequate for such masses of men, so that the Boers may have thought themselves bound to the Modder River. But, if Cronje wished to carry out his intention successfully, he should have resolved to abandon the whole of his cumbrous train together with the women and children, and to have hurried on with his mobile horsemen, so as to try and escape the certain danger of being cut off from his line of retreat by an advance of the British. Such a step, however, was impracticable in an army where every man thought first of his own property and of his wife and family. Cronje's march on the night of February 15th-16th was protected by a strong rear-guard of 2,000 skilled riflemen, and the route lay about two miles from and along the front of the British sixth division in the direction of Drieput, while the pace was as rapid as the baggage would allow.

* Four 3-inch Krupp guns and two Maxims. † Map 8.

This march was not noticed by the sixth division; the squadron left behind at Abon's Dam declared, indeed, that it had ascertained in good time the departure of the Boers from the heights of Magersfontein, but, at any rate, it omitted to transmit this important intelligence to the sixth division, which was next to it. It almost seemed as if Cronje's bold enterprise would succeed, and that the Boers would slip unperceived through the gap which existed between the cavalry and the sixth division. But, at sunrise on the 16th, vast clouds of dust leading in an easterly direction towards Drieput were observed from the outposts of the sixth division, where the ever indefatigable Lord Kitchener* also was. The Chief of the Staff saw at once that the situation, which was now completely altered, required that the army should move off immediately to its right in order to pursue the Boers. The conjecture that the enemy had marched in the night was confirmed by a report, received shortly afterwards from the mounted infantry, which had captured several Boers who had remained behind, and from whom exact information as to Cronje's departure had been obtained.

Lord Kitchener at once issued the necessary orders for the pursuit. The mounted infantry, the thirteenth brigade, under Knox, which was at Klip Drift, and the divisional artillery were directed to pursue the enemy and to attack him resolutely, so as to hold him fast, and

* Lord Kitchener, who was with the advanced troops, directed the operations from February 15th to 19th. This was really the duty of Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, who commanded the sixth division, as he was the senior both in rank and service, but Lord Roberts had arranged with him that, in the Commander-in-Chief's absence, all orders given by Lord Kitchener should be regarded as coming from Army Headquarters. "Lord Kitchener will accompany you in order to communicate my orders to you, so that no delay to the operations may arise."—(*Lord Roberts to Kelly-Kenny, Feb. 17th.*) The Headquarter Staff remained at Jacobsdal until the morning of Feb. 19th. Doubtless the Commander-in-Chief would have hurried to the front at a time when every hour might necessitate the most important decisions, but he was unfortunately confined to bed just at this period by a serious indisposition.

prevent his escape. The Chief of the Staff telegraphed the news of the Boer retreat to Headquarters; he also requested that the ninth division should be at once despatched to Klip Kraal Drift, and he suggested the cavalry division should bar the way against the retiring enemy. Lord Roberts, nevertheless, still clung to the primary objective, Kimberley, and thought, apparently, that Cronje's column was merely a small Commando. Therefore he ordered the ninth division, at midday on February 16th, to march in the direction of Kimberley, and it was not until he heard from Lord Methuen, at Modder River Station, that Cronje had evacuated the heights of Magersfontein that he ordered the army to march to its right, for which movement the ninth division was directed to send one brigade to Klip Drift and one to Klip Kraal Drift.*

Kitchener, meanwhile, had at once taken up the pursuit of Cronje with the sixth division, and the artillery, which was hurrying on with the mounted infantry, opened fire about 7.30 a.m. on the retreating enemy from the heights situated about three miles to the north-east of Klip Drift. The Boer rear-guard took up a position on the heights at Drieput. The mounted infantry attacked immediately, but failed to throw back the adversary, who did not evacuate his position until about 11 a.m., after the thirteenth brigade and some mounted infantry had made a combined frontal and flank attack. Three battalions carried out the former, while the fourth battalion moved along the south bank, crossed the Modder River with the mounted infantry not far from Drieput Drift, and advanced against the Boer left.† The Boers turned repeatedly on their pursuers, retreated to a position north-west of Klip Kraal Drift, which they occupied strongly about 2 p.m.,

* See Appendix V.

† Many horses were drowned on this occasion.

and held their ground until darkness set in, notwithstanding the repeated efforts made by the British to dislodge them. Thanks to the stout resistance offered by their rear-guard, it had now become possible for the Boers, together with all their baggage, to escape the threatened danger in the first place, and, secondly, to continue their retreat in an easterly direction along the north bank of the Modder River. The English loss, on this occasion, amounted to 6 officers, and 119 men killed and wounded, while that of the defenders is said to have been only trifling. The thirteenth brigade, together with the artillery and mounted infantry, bivouacked not far from the battle-field, and the troops ate the day's ration, which they had with them, as the baggage had been kept back at Klip Drift with the eighteenth brigade. During the course of the day this brigade took possession at Bosjespan of an abandoned Boer laager, where there were found 78 carts, laden with supplies, and a quantity of ammunition. Lord Kitchener, who had accompanied the thirteenth brigade in the morning, returned to Klip Drift at 5 p.m., in order to arrange for the further pursuit of Cronje; the eighteenth brigade was to march from Klip Drift during the night so as to effect a junction, early on the 17th, with the thirteenth brigade at Klip Kraal Drift, while the mounted infantry and the artillery were to keep in touch with the enemy, and to bar his road, if possible, at Paardeberg Drift.

The Chief of the Staff informed General French of the change in the situation by means of an officer's patrol, and requested him to march that night with the cavalry division, in order to place himself in front of the retreating Boers at Koodoes Rand Drift. A telegram to the same effect was also despatched from Headquarters at Jacobsdal *viâ* Modder River Station to General French, but owing to an accident this message only reached him

some days afterwards; another proof of the necessity of always sending important orders of this description in duplicate by two different routes. If Lord Kitchener at Klip Drift had not informed General French of the state of affairs, the cavalry division could not have taken part in the pursuit of Cronje, who would then, probably, have succeeded in escaping.

The first and third cavalry brigades,* and the mounted infantry had commenced, on February 16th, the pursuit of the investing force in a northerly direction towards Macfarlane's Station, the idea being to capture the train, and the heavy guns of the Boers. The rear-guard of the latter offered a stout resistance at Dronfield, where several hot fights took place, none of which, however, resulted in any advantage for the British. Notwithstanding considerable superiority in numbers the cavalry, which fought dismounted, was unable to drive off the Boer rear-guard, although, according to a reliable source, this does not seem to have consisted of more than a hundred men, while there were, at one time, not less than 24 English guns in action.

Neither of the cavalry brigades achieved anything whatever on this extremely hot and tiring day, which caused extraordinary loss of horse-flesh; sunstroke destroyed hundreds of animals, as there was no water available, the Boers having rendered the few wells unserviceable.

In consequence of the great loss in dead and unfit horses, the two brigades returned in the evening to Kimberley in as weak a state as if they had ridden in a deadly charge, and neither of them could be employed again for some days. During the period from February 12th to February 17th the cavalry division had more than 1,600 horses unable to march, which had to be left behind at Klip Drift or Kimberley, that is to say, the

* Of the first brigade most of the Carabineers were left to guard the bivouac ground.

establishment of horses was reduced by about 25 per cent. owing to excessive exertions and want of proper care.* The horses were so exhausted that in one regiment, which was very well mounted on the 11th, only 28 were able to trot when mustered on the 17th. In spite of the utmost care few of the animals recovered altogether from the exertions of that day. But, besides the fact that the cavalry, notwithstanding all its sacrifices, had achieved absolutely nothing, its employment on February 16th was unfortunate, although the untiring energy and initiative of the cavalry commander is deserving of the highest recognition. After Kimberley had been relieved, the pursuit of the weak investing force was not the next and most important duty of the cavalry division, attractive as it might be to try and catch it; the object of all further operations ought to have been the destruction of the main body of the enemy under Cronje; to prevent his escape was the business of the cavalry division, and a more important task than to capture the trains of the weak investing Commandos.

The second cavalry brigade, under General Broadwood, had remained to the south of Kimberley with instructions to reconnoitre in the direction of Magersfontein. When General French returned to Kimberley, he heard from Broadwood that a large column of Boers, with guns and numerous carts, had moved in an easterly direction from the heights of Magersfontein and that the country to the south of Kimberley was quite clear of the enemy. Shortly afterwards the message from Lord Kitchener, which has been already mentioned, arrived, confirming this intelligence, and Broadwood's Brigade was thereupon ordered to march with Q and R Batteries of the Horse Artillery at 3.30 a.m. on February 17th by Olifantsfontein, where

* On February 16th the first and third brigades were dismissed before their horses had been watered and fed.

two squadrons of the Carabineers from the first brigade were to join it, to Koodoes Rand Drift. The remaining two brigades, being unfit to march, had to be left behind at Kimberley for the time being, the third brigade, under Gordon, being directed to follow the second on February 18th if able to do so. Colonel Porter was appointed commandant of Kimberley.

During the night of February 16th-17th Cronje attempted to evade his pursuers by means of a forced march; unperceived by the mounted infantry, under Colonel Hannay, who had been specially charged with the duty of keeping in touch with the enemy, the Boer rear-guard evacuated its position on the heights north-west of Klip Kraal Drift, and the retreat was continued, unmolested, by Paardeberg towards Koodoes Rand Drift, where the south bank of the Modder River was to be gained. When Cronje reached Wolves Kraal Drift about 8 a.m., he thought he was safe from his pursuers, and ordered a rest of several hours' duration, as the men and animals were completely exhausted by the uninterrupted marching and fighting of the preceding 36 hours. Commandant Fronemann was directed to occupy the kopjes overlooking the ford at Koodoes Rand with a strong advanced guard.

The Modder River is about 60 yards broad, and flows between steep banks, some 15 yards in height, at the spot selected for the halt, the banks themselves being covered with thick mimosa and other bush, 200 or 300 yards wide in places, and affording excellent cover. The camp was pitched on the north bank near Wolves Kraal Drift. The river makes a sharp bend to the south about two miles to the west of the laager, and a rather deep and narrow watercourse, coming from the north, joins the Modder River at that point. This watercourse was dry at the time, and its banks were very thickly

covered with every description of bush and undergrowth. It formed the western portion of the Boer position, and was occupied by the rear-guard under Commandant Potgieter. A hill, which rises to a height of 150 feet above the river bed, is situated about a mile to the north-west of this position, and was called afterwards Signal Hill, while another eminence on the south bank, some 3,300 yards to the south of the bend, was named Gun Hill. Paardeberg Hill, 650 feet high, lies to the west of Signal Hill and commands all the surrounding country.

Numerous small watercourses, which were dry at the time, but covered with thick undergrowth, joined the Modder River at right angles from the north and south about 1,600 yards east of the laager, while a hill about 400 feet in height, and two or two and a-half miles to the south of the camp, rising from the otherwise level country commands all the neighbouring region, and was afterwards called Kitchener's Kopje. The ground on both banks of the river was open, and gently sloping for a distance of from 1,100 to 1,600 yards, and was covered here and there with small ant hills from 12 to 16 inches high, which afforded only very slight cover.

Cronje continued his march towards noon, and the Modder River was to be crossed at Koodoes Rand and Wolves Kraal Drifts. The leading cart was just approaching the last-named ford, when several shells fell altogether unexpectedly close to the wagons, and were immediately followed by others. Great confusion arose, and the heights north of the drift towards Kameelfontein seemed to be lined by an immense force of artillery. Every man took to his heels, and the moment was one of uncontrollable disorder. To continue the march appeared to be impossible, and Cronje believed that the British infantry had already outstripped the Boer army, for he calculated that the cavalry division, of whose galling fighting on the

previous day, nearly 20 miles to the north of Kimberley he had already heard, could by no possibility now be on the Modder River; therefore, it must be English infantry which was in front of him.

It was, nevertheless, the indefatigable General French, who, by his own energy, had accomplished the seemingly impossible. Contrary to the opinion of his brigadiers, who had declared that the complete exhaustion of the men and horses rendered all action on February 17th out of the question, he had left Kimberley about 4 a.m. with the second brigade,* two squadrons of the Carabineers,† and the horse artillery batteries. In spite of the great heat, and notwithstanding the fact that no water was to be found during the march, he reached Kameelfontein, nearly four miles north of Wolves Kraal Drift, towards 11 a.m. The patrols, which had been sent towards Paardeberg and Koodoes Rand Drifts had noticed clouds of dust in the valley of the river, which were moving in an easterly direction, but it was not certain whether they were formed by the enemy's columns or by the British troops. General French halted at Kameelfontein to water the horses, and he himself utilised this period of repose to reconnoitre personally in the direction of Koodoes Rand Drift and the Modder River. He had scarcely ridden a thousand yards on to the heights south of Kameelfontein, when he saw the whole Boer laager, reposing peacefully in the valley in front of him. The moment was one of

* The marching out strength of this brigade on February 17th was:—

Household Cavalry	27 officers	371 men
10th Hussars	23 „	321 „
12th Lancers	19 „	258 „
2 Squadrons Carabineers ...	13 „	182 „
Total	82 „	1,132 „

And two batteries R.H.A. of 6 guns each.

† One squadron of this regiment was sent to reconnoitre in a north-easterly direction towards Boshof, to locate the Boers against whom the cavalry division had been in action on the previous day.

the most extreme tension. He at once ordered the two batteries of horse artillery to open fire on the Boer laager at about 3,300 yards range from the river. As French had arrived exactly at the time when Cronje was going to resume his march, the latter sent his guns to take up a position on some high ground near the river to reply to the British artillery; a strong detachment of Boers also moved simultaneously against the right flank of the English guns, but it was kept off by the 10th Hussars, who occupied a small but commanding hill on the right of their guns in order to protect them. Two squadrons of the regiment attempted to charge these Boers late in the afternoon, so as to throw them back into the valley of the river, and also to ascertain whether there was a strong force there. But, when they arrived within 600 or 700 yards from the enemy, they had to wheel about, as their horses were too exhausted to make a resolute attack; the squadrons themselves lost several men killed and wounded.

The situation was more difficult for the British on their left wing; as soon as his guns had come into action, General French had himself directed the 12th Lancers to occupy the heights of Koodoes Rand Drift, situated to the east of the batteries, and also the Drift itself, but the lancers reported that both the heights and the ford were strongly held by the enemy. This was the Boer advanced guard, under Fronemann, which had been sent to Koodoes Rand, and which then advanced to attack, its artillery fire reaching as far as Kameelfontein Farm. It was only with difficulty that the lancers, reinforced by the Household Cavalry, succeeded in keeping off the enemy on that wing. It was a critical time; the English commander looked anxiously towards the west for the expected infantry reinforcement from Klip Drift so ardently longed for, but nothing was visible on the horizon, and it almost

seemed as if the superior Boer force would prove victorious. If the Boers had realised how few troops were in front of them, Cronje could have continued his march. The hot hours of the afternoon passed slowly by, full of torturing uncertainty, when, at last, as the sun was setting, thick clouds of dust became visible far away on the horizon towards Paardeberg, and heralded the approaching help. Everybody breathed more freely, and the strength of the handful of dismounted horsemen received new life.

It was owing to the gallant perseverance of the British cavalry, and to the heavier and more effective fire of the batteries, that a further and victorious advance of the Boers against the left flank was prevented, and that the whole Boer army was stopped for an entire day by scarcely more than a thousand dismounted cavalrymen. This was a very remarkable achievement, and it shows what cavalry fighting on foot can do when properly used, and of what incalculable value great masses of cavalry, trained in dismounted action, may be throughout a whole campaign. The capture of Cronje was chiefly due to the ability with which the cavalry division was handled, and to the skill of its gallant and resolute commander. If French had not delayed the Boer army for a whole day, Cronje would probably have succeeded in escaping from his pursuers on account of the great start which he had gained on the sixth British division by his night march of February 16th-17th, and he would also, in all likelihood, have collected reinforcements from all sides before the decisive battle.

It is not possible to draw a clear picture of the employment and tactics of the cavalry, when fighting on foot, from what has hitherto been published on the subject. It appears, however, that the cavalry, imitating the Boer tactics, which had been so successful, was widely

scattered in groups on all the kopjes and small eminences, while the led horses were placed under cover immediately in rear of their respective groups. This method of dismounted action for cavalry is unquestionably a very good one, and worthy of imitation, for a great extension of front, when smokeless powder is used, may easily deceive the enemy as to the force which is in front of him. The increased power of the modern rifle favours a stout defence, and will render a decrease in the depth of formations all the less hazardous, because in engagements, such as the one just described, it will generally be more important to make the enemy halt than to fight a decisive action. The combats of the English cavalry division on February 16th and February 17th are of quite extraordinary value in this respect. When, on the former date, it endeavoured to fight a decisive action, and, by attacking the enemy, to drive him out of his strong position on the heights of Dronfield, it showed itself unequal to the task; on the other hand, when, on the 17th, it was merely a question of a stubborn defence in order to stop the adversary, the cavalry carried out its duty in a brilliant manner, and rendered incalculable service.

The fire of both sides slackened gradually when darkness fell, whereupon the Boer riflemen returned to their laager, but the sound of several artillery salvoes penetrated far during the stillness of the night, and announced to the approaching infantry that General French had succeeded in keeping the enemy at bay at Koodoes Rand. Cronje's fate appeared to be sealed. The British infantry was hurriedly coming up; the sixth division, which was immediately following the Boers, had marched at 3.30 a.m. on the 17th from Klip Drift with its eighteenth brigade, and had joined the thirteenth brigade at Klip Kraal Drift soon after daybreak; it then continued its march on

the south bank of the Modder River towards Brandwallei Drift, which it reached about 10 a.m. It moved thence at 5 p.m. and marched for the greater portion of the night in the general direction of Koodoes Rand Drift. It was not known where the Boer army was, touch with it having been lost* owing to the carelessness of the mounted infantry during the night of February 16th-17th. General Kelly-Kenny took advantage of a long halt, shortly before sunrise, to ride on to a hill situated to the left front of the division, which afforded a view towards the Modder River. When day began to break he suddenly perceived to his intense astonishment, first indistinctly, and then more and more clearly as the light became brighter, a large Boer laager gleaming in the sunlight a few thousand yards in front of him. He and his Staff were on the so-called Gun Hill opposite to Wolves Kraal Drift; the great exertions which he had demanded from his troops were rewarded; he had succeeded in overtaking Cronje, and his division was to the south of and not far from the laager.

Meanwhile the ninth division had also come up; its nineteenth brigade had marched from Jacobsdal to Klip Drift in the night of February 16th-17th, while its Highland Brigade, marching across country, had reached Klip Kraal Drift. Lord Kitchener had then ordered the division to continue its march to Paardeberg Drift about 5 p.m. on February 17th; the Highland Brigade arrived there towards eleven o'clock at night, but the nineteenth brigade did not get there until a quarter-past four on the morning of the 18th. In spite of short rations, and of the great heat, the division had marched nearly 31 miles in less than 24 hours, a performance of the very

* The mounted infantry had, it is true, heard the guns of the cavalry division, but appears to have thought that the latter was only engaged with the enemy's rear-guard.

first order, which is still further enhanced by the fact that there were very few stragglers.*

The mounted infantry had likewise come up with Cronje's laager, on the evening of the 17th, without becoming aware of the fact. When its commander reported to Lord Kitchener, who arrived at Klip Kraal Drift in the early hours of February 17th, that he had lost touch with the enemy during the night, the Chief of the Staff at once assumed command in person of the mounted infantry. Regardless of man and beast the troops marched the whole day towards the sound of the cavalry division guns, but without discovering the Boers, and, when darkness set in, the utterly exhausted men and horses bivouacked some thousands of yards to the east of Paardeberg Drift. It was not until daybreak on February 18th that Lord Kitchener, who had ridden forward to reconnoitre, saw that he had overtaken Cronje. With his wonted energy he issued orders for an immediate attack with the troops on the spot, after he had completed his reconnaissance of the Boer position.

General Cronje became convinced, early on February 18th, that there was no longer any chance of escape, and he made arrangements to strengthen the position, in which he found himself, as much as possible, and to prepare for a stubborn defence. Had he been aware that only a small portion of the cavalry division was opposed to him on the 17th, he would, undoubtedly, have endeavoured to escape during the night of February 17th-18th, especially as a messenger from Commandant Ferreira reached him on the 17th, who advised him to abandon the women, children, and the whole of his baggage, and to break through with his men towards the north or the

* The Naval Brigade also made a splendid march with its ship's guns (four 4·7 inch and four 12-pounders), for it covered the distance from Jacobsdal to Paardeberg, a distance of nearly 31 miles, in 23 hours.

east, and join hands with the commandant. Cronje, however, could not reconcile himself to this course.

While all these preliminaries to the decisive struggle on the Modder River were going on, the Headquarter Staff remained at Jacobsdal engaged in reorganising the arrangements for the Lines of Communication. Important and drastic changes were made in them; hitherto the transport and supply services had been united under one head, but they were now separated, each being placed directly under the Commander-in-Chief, and that this measure was a very sound one was proved by the result. Its sole disadvantage was that numerous dissensions resulted among the supply and transport officers respectively. The former wished to overload the carts, so as to push forward as large a quantity of supplies as possible at one time. The transport officers, on the other hand, required that the loads should be as small as possible in order to keep the teams efficient. Notwithstanding this initial friction, however, it became possible, thanks to the intelligent and devoted zeal of all the departments concerned, always to keep pace with the enormous difficulties, which multiplied daily on account of the ever increasing length of the communications. Apart from the short crisis in supply, already alluded to, an army has seldom been so well provided under equally difficult conditions as was the British army in the South African war. Lord Kitchener was of opinion that the army in South Africa was better supplied than ever before. The supplies, both local and imported, were always very good when issued.

In this respect the broadmindedness, foresight, and practical sense of the British race showed themselves in a high degree; accustomed as it has been for centuries to deal with local and financial conditions on a great scale, the officers and officials were able to supervise with certainty, and to overcome successfully all those difficulties,

which were due to the extensive theatre of war, so different in every respect from the conditions in England, especially with regard to the question of the supply of the army. With sure and rapid grasp, Lord Roberts remedied the deficiencies which had shown themselves in the army, and provided it with an organisation suitable to the peculiar theatre of war, while actually in the field.

The Headquarter Staff left Jacobsdal for the Modder River early on February 19th. Lord Roberts had previously ordered Lord Methuen to get the railway from Modder River Station to Kimberley into working order at once, and to move with his troops to the latter place. The Brigade of Guards, under Pole-Carew, which had hitherto formed part of the first division, was subordinated immediately to the Commander-in-Chief, in order to take part in the operations on the Modder River, and it moved, therefore, early on February 18th from Modder River Station to Klip Drift to join the other divisions at Paardeberg. Lord Methuen's command now consisted of the ninth brigade, under Major-General Douglas, 1,000 men of the Imperial Yeomanry, the 20th and 38th Field Batteries, two Canadian Field Batteries, and one New South Wales Field Battery.

It was intended to strengthen this force later by another infantry brigade, consisting of three militia battalions, which had not yet reached Cape Town from England.

Kimberley became the main depôt after Lord Methuen's arrival there on February 22nd, and all the supplies at De Aar, Orange River Station, and Modder River Station were transferred to that place. Lord Methuen was also charged with the duty of protecting the communications of the army advancing on Bloemfontein.

CHAPTER XV.

COMMENTS ON THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND THE PURSUIT OF CRONJE.

The energy of the new British Commander-in-Chief, and the endurance of the troops in undergoing exertions, and in supporting privations, were very clearly shown during the operations from Graspan to Paardeberg.

It is difficult to criticise exhaustively and correctly either the plan of these operations, or the manner in which they were carried out, because too little is known as yet of what went on at Headquarters. There is, especially, a want of knowledge, for the time being, as to how far the political situation, and, above all, public opinion in England, which wanted Kimberley to be relieved as quickly as possible, influenced the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief, but, regarded from a purely military point of view, the carrying out of the operations does not appear to have been altogether faultless.

The relief of Kimberley was, of course, the first objective in order to secure an assured base for the advance on Bloemfontein. But this could not exercise a decisive influence on the military situation as a whole, and especially on the conduct of the further operations, unless the Boer forces at Magersfontein, which were covering the siege should first of all have been destroyed. If this should

happen, then Kimberley would also be relieved. It seems, however, that Lord Roberts was shy of attacking the strong position at Magersfontein, and that the far reaching movement against the flank and rear of the enemy was intended rather to out-manœuvre him from his position, and so to open the way to Kimberley, than to be the precursor of a decisive battle. In support of this assumption is the fact that the Commander-in-Chief clung to Kimberley as the objective, even after the relief, and after he had already heard of the retreat of Cronje on Bloemfontein. The despatch of the cavalry division to Kimberley affords further corroboration, for its first aim ought to have been not Kimberley, but the reconnaissance of the Boers on the heights of Magersfontein, and the task of preventing their retreat until the infantry should come up. The place of the cavalry division, therefore, was not at Kimberley in the first instance, especially as the relief of the town was by no means urgent,* but in the region between the Modder River and Kimberley, somewhere towards Abon's Dam.

The design of the Commander-in-Chief merely to manœuvre Cronje out of his position was not in accordance with modern views on war. For if Cronje actually evacuated the heights of Magersfontein in consequence of his flank being threatened, so that Kimberley could be relieved, the general military situation would not have gained much, apart from the moral effect, from the mere possession of that city. There was nothing to justify the hope of Lord Roberts that he would be able later to force Cronje to fight a decisive battle under conditions more unfavourable to the latter. That this was actually the case afterwards was solely Cronje's fault, and the British Commander-in-Chief, when planning the operations, could

* The Commandant had heliographed to Headquarters at the beginning of February that he could certainly hold out until the end of the month.

at no time have reckoned with certainty on this contingency, nor should he have done so. For if Cronje had retreated on Bloemfontein in time, then the decisive battle, which would have been merely postponed, must have been fought before the entry into that capital, probably under very much more difficult conditions, for the Boer commander could then have collected numerous reinforcements from all sides, and have accepted battle when and where he pleased. Meanwhile, however, the British, with their great superiority in numbers, had their best chance of surprising the Boer forces, which were dispersed over a wide area, and of inflicting a decisive defeat on Cronje, notwithstanding his strong position at Magersfontein.

Had Cronje moved off in a north-easterly direction, somewhere towards Boshof, he would have been on the flank of the English, and would have threatened their further advance on Bloemfontein, which could not have been continued until he should have been defeated. But this would have entailed the British operations being diverted into quite another and unwished for direction.

Even assuming, however, that the original intention of the British Commander-in-Chief had really been to force Cronje to fight a decisive battle to the south of Kimberley, and to take the first steps towards surrounding the Boers by the march from Graspan to Klip Drift, the grouping of the British forces was not a happy one for the purpose. It is a well known fact that, in order to surround an enemy, he must be attacked energetically in front; otherwise it will always remain open to the defender to reinforce his threatened flank, and to prevent himself from being encompassed either by prolonging his front or by a timely withdrawal. Very much stronger forces, therefore—two divisions at least—ought to have been left at Modder River Camp, with the express object of holding Cronje fast in his position by means of a

frontal attack, until he should have been effectually surrounded. But the first division allowed Cronje to march quietly away without making even an effort to stop him, and all this corroborates the idea that the Commander-in-Chief had no intention whatever of first destroying Cronje's force, and then relieving Kimberley. It is due less to the plan of operations, and the manner in which it was carried out, than to the errors committed by the adversary, that the result was ultimately so successful for the British. General Cronje was a brave soldier, but in no way fitted for his high position, as was acknowledged by the Boers themselves when it was too late. The system of command in the Boer army occasioned predicaments which are possible only in a militia army, and the bitter experiences, which the Boers were destined to undergo, afford an instructive warning for all adherents of such a system.

During the advance towards the Modder River the English divisions were often so far apart from one another as to offer several favourable opportunities to an enterprising adversary to defeat them in detail. The sixth division in its advanced position at Klip Drift on February 15th, as well as the weak and isolated first division at Modder River Camp from the 11th to the 15th of February, are instances in point. As it was possible for the divisions to march at any time, and in any direction across the open veldt, it would have been a simple matter to arrange the marches so that a concentration could have been effected at any time. It would certainly have been difficult to provide the troops with sufficient water, but this difficulty could have been overcome by advancing on both banks of the Riet River, which might be crossed at numerous drifts.

On the other hand the operations for the pursuit and investment of Cronje afford splendid proof of the energy

and resolution of the Commander-in-Chief, of the intelligent co-operation and initiative of all the subordinate generals, and of the devotion of the troops in cheerfully undergoing exertion and privation. The history of those days is a page of glory in the chronicles of the British army, and every true soldier will unreservedly acknowledge this to be the case.

The numerous night marches are the most striking feature of the movements of troops, and they are to be attributed substantially to two causes, namely, the great heat, and the very proper endeavour not to let go of the enemy. Those night marches, however, which were undertaken exclusively on account of the great heat by day, were not very fortunate efforts, according to the almost unanimous verdict of those who took part in them. According to General Colvile, who commanded the ninth division, they affected the troops out of all proportion to their length, especially as the men, who had no tents, were unable to get sufficient repose in the blazing summer heat. These night marches also lasted very much longer than one of equal length by day would have done, on account of the bad roads and the darkness; it also happened frequently that the troops lost their way altogether, and had to remain inactive on the veldt until daylight, in order to regain their route. Marching at night was, therefore, on several occasions a sheer waste of time.

General Colvile has given the following as the result of his numerous experiences concerning marches by day and by night during his Colonial campaigns: "The best results were obtained when we moved off at daybreak, and marched steadily for 14 miles, making a long halt for a meal when the greater part of the distance had been covered; when possible, however, the troops marched direct to the new bivouac." The German field service

regulations also enunciate these principles, the truth of which was also shown under the different conditions of the South African theatre of war.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary exertions, due to the climatic conditions, scanty supplies just at that time, and the frequently recurring want of repose at night, the number of men belonging to the infantry who fell out was relatively small. The units arrived almost up to their marching out strength for the battle on the 18th of February, and this is certainly an eloquent proof of the endurance of the British soldiers at that period.

The results of the great exertions were more serious for the cavalry. Its enormous loss in horses* is to be ascribed to several causes, such as scarcity of forage and water, bad horse management, indifferent discipline on the march,† and the fact that the troops had arrived in a new climate, out of condition after their long journey by sea and rail. But of all the unfavourable circumstances the most detrimental one was, in the opinion of everybody who was with the cavalry during that exhausting period, General French's custom of moving off in the night, without its being possible to first water and feed the horses properly. This habit cost the lives of many horses of the first and third brigades on February 16th. The fact of the men and animals having been much exhausted by the want of sufficient rest at night explains also, in part, the very poor reconnaissance results which were obtained during this period. The approach of the

* The cavalry division had to leave 326 horses behind at Klip Drift, and 597 at Kimberley, as unfit to march; 558 horses were dead or missing, and 139 were sick. But the greatest loss of horseflesh did not occur until after Paardeberg.

† The German Military Attaché with the British army wrote that "the omission on the part of the officers and non-commissioned officers of the cavalry to interfere energetically in order to maintain proper discipline in marching and riding was most destructive. The reason for the large number of galled horses became at once apparent, on seeing the men lolling on their saddles in the most careless manner."

enemy was seldom observed in good time, and, after contact had been established, touch was invariably lost with him, the capture of the supply column on February 15th being the bitter penalty for this neglect. The cavalry division, from the very beginning, made no reconnaissance far in advance of the army, but contented itself with reconnoitring the ground close at hand, and immediately to the front. As a reconnoitring body, therefore, the cavalry division was practically useless during the period in question, noteworthy as were its services in action. Experience had shown that to send isolated and weak patrols a long distance was of little use, in view of the difficulties in the way of scouting caused by the modern rifle. The Boers used, as a rule, to allow these patrols to approach close to them, and they then shot them down; while the smokeless powder rendered it rarely possible to ascertain correctly the strength of an enemy in position, the far ranging rifle often necessitated long circuits round the flank and rear, whereby the reports were frequently very much delayed. In addition it was most difficult for the patrols to find their way about in the strange and monotonous country.

All these difficulties, however, are a fresh proof that the despatch of isolated and so-called "strategical" patrols far to the front will never of itself ensure a thorough and timely reconnaissance; for this purpose a carefully organised, far reaching system of reconnoitring is required, such as is described in the German field service regulations for advanced squadrons, reconnoitring squadrons, and the strong officers' patrols which are pushed far out in front. Individual men, who merely ride about or who approach an enemy already in position will rarely attain their object. Under such circumstances cavalry will have to fight on foot in order to reconnoitre thoroughly, and for this purpose the employment of strong detach-

ments will be necessary. If they be skilfully handled, and widely extended in small groups, they will thus be able most quickly to ascertain, at least approximately, the strength and dispositions even of an adversary already in position, provided the topographical conditions be in some degree favourable.

The fact that the British Commander-in-Chief had not informed even the divisional commanders of his intentions and plans, with the very proper intention of keeping these secret from the enemy, has already been mentioned; it is, however, open to question whether he did not go too far in this direction. Lieut.-General Kelly-Kenny, a leader of more than ordinary military ability, did not grasp the whole situation on February 15th; otherwise it would have been inconceivable that he should have remained inactive on the Modder River throughout the entire day, without sending his mounted infantry to reconnoitre towards Magersfontein, where the main body of the Boers was still known to be; had he been aware of the plan of campaign he must have known in time of Cronje's departure, and he could have barred his way by simply advancing in the direction of Abon's Dam. By these means the result which was only secured several days later by the army moving to its right, pursuing the Boers in galling actions, and at the cost of heavy sacrifices and exertions on the part of the troops, would have been attained on the evening of the 15th. The sixth division was to blame for having allowed Cronje to slip unperceived through the gap which had been left between the cavalry and itself; it ought to have reconnoitred with more energy on the 15th, and to have closed the gap with a portion of its infantry, however exhausted the latter might have been.

CHAPTER XVI.

LORD KITCHENER DECIDES ON AN IMMEDIATE ATTACK.

When General Cronje recognised that escape was no longer possible, he issued instructions, as has been already mentioned, at dawn on February 18th, for the strengthening of his position in the valley of the river. The Boer laager was situated at Wolves Kraal Drift on both banks of the Modder River, which was shallow and about sixty yards broad at that point, and it was between that drift and Paardeberg Drift that the fighting took place on February 18th. The Boer riflemen, concealed by the bush, were widely extended along the banks on both sides of the river in a curious position. There were small and dried up watercourses on its flanks, situated about two or three thousand yards to the east and west of the laager, and these were very strongly held; with their thick, low undergrowth they afforded excellent natural cover most favourable for defence. The distribution of the Boer forces in the position, and especially the number of men who were in action in the various portions of the battle-field, cannot be ascertained even approximately. The guns were placed on the north bank to the east of and close to the laager; they faced at first towards the north-east, so as to oppose French's cavalry. The Boer position was not badly chosen for a purely passive defence by infantry, for there was a clear field of fire everywhere, and an attack would have to be carried out across about 2,000

yards of perfectly flat country, except where there was bush 200 or 300 yards wide along the river valley. To ensure the safety of the numerous women and children, a quantity of shelters had been hollowed out at the bottom of the river valley in the steep banks, and these afforded them complete security from all kinds of fire. Cronje's Headquarters were at the drift on the south bank.*

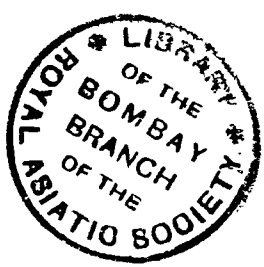
Early on the 18th the British cavalry and the sixth and ninth divisions were not far from Paardeberg and about to surround Cronje; the seventh division was at Jacobsdal, and the first at Modder River Camp.

Lord Kitchener himself reconnoitred the enemy's position at an early hour. Cronje's fate appeared to be sealed, and the only question was whether the final blow should be struck at once, or whether it would be better to trust to time, remaining content with having surrounded him, until hunger and an artillery bombardment should compel the Boers to surrender. For weighty reasons Lord Kitchener decided on an immediate attack. It was known that numerous and strong bodies of the enemy were hastening from Bloemfontein and the Orange River to reinforce Cronje, and as their arrival might, under certain circumstances, destroy all the advantages hitherto gained, prompt action seemed to be desirable. Bitter experience had likewise shown that the difficulties of the attack would be multiplied if time were given to the Boers, who were so skilful in rapidly strengthening a position. But, as they had as yet thrown up only weak entrenchments, it still seemed possible to overcome their resistance easily and without too great loss, especially as all the information concerning the enemy was to the effect that he was very much dispirited, and that the ceaseless pursuit of the preceding days had greatly weakened his

* According to an eye-witness he "had a complete system of subterranean shelters dug in the steep banks, and these were connected by numerous passages."

power of resistance. There was also another consideration; the great scarcity of means of transport, and the threatened Commissariat difficulties rendered the early capture of the numerous carts and supplies, which the Boers were known to possess, of enhanced importance for the rapid success of the move on Bloemfontein.

All these reasons thoroughly justified the resolve of the Chief of the Staff to attack with the superior forces available on the spot, but the manner in which this decision was executed was certainly less happy. It had this defect, that the action at Paardeberg on February 18th was not one single tactical operation, but was rather subdivided into three smaller and isolated combats, each of which was fought independently at considerable intervals of time and place.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SIXTH DIVISION AND THE HIGHLAND BRIGADE ON THE SOUTH BANK.*

About 6 a.m. Lord Kitchener ordered the sixth division to attack immediately, and at half-past six the 76th and 81st Field Batteries opened fire on the Boer laager in the river valley from Gun Hill on the south bank.† The infantry deployed under cover of this fire, five battalions advancing about 7 a.m. between Gun Hill and Kitchener's Kopje to make a frontal attack on the Boers, while the two remaining battalions, the Welch and the Essex, were ordered to make a circuit eastwards, and advance along the valley of the river so as to attack the Boer left flank. Of the five battalions making the frontal attack on the south bank, four were in the first line, the 1st Yorkshire, of the eighteenth brigade, being on the right, the 1st West Riding, of the thirteenth brigade, next to it; then came the Buffs, and, on the left wing, the 1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry. The 2nd Gloucestershires were held in reserve; two of its companies acted as escort to the artillery on Gun Hill, three companies remained to protect the baggage and trains at the bivouac, and the three remaining companies were

* This account is based substantially upon the written and verbal descriptions of Germans on the Boer side, several British officers, and the Editor of the "Times" history, and the General Staff takes this opportunity of expressing its especial thanks to them.

† Map 8.

directed to occupy Kitchener's Kopje on the right flank. The battalions formed for attack in three lines as a rule, and about 3,000 yards from the river bed; the firing line of each consisted of two or three companies with five or six paces interval between each man, three other companies, also widely extended, followed as immediate supports about 300 yards in rear, and behind them came as a reserve the remaining companies in line about a quarter of a mile from the supports. The four battalions had a front of about two miles.

The battalions advanced in this formation towards the river at a lively pace across the bare plain. The enemy opened fire at a range of over 2,200 yards,* but without much effect; he had previously directed it against the artillery on Gun Hill, but without any result as the distance was nearly two miles. The British skirmishers did not open fire until within about a mile from the Boers; they had not yet suffered sufficient loss to be compelled to halt, although nothing could be seen as yet of the adversary. Volley firing was employed at first, but, as the range diminished, and it became possible to distinguish a target, individual fire was alone used. After a short musketry action the advance was resumed by mutually supported rushes of ninety or a hundred yards, and was occasioned, at the longer ranges, mostly by the arrival of reinforcements, which carried the firing line along with them, and which were intended not so much to increase the fire of the latter as to give it continually fresh incentive to advance.

These supports advanced as a rule by rushes in a widely extended line with about ten or twelve paces interval between each man. The last one or two hundred yards from the firing line, especially at the shorter ranges,

* As a rule the Boers at Paardeberg did not fire at ranges exceeding a mile.

were crawled over as the enemy's fire was directed principally against these supports. At the decisive ranges of 500 yards and under the firing line also advanced crawling as a rule, one company of a battalion moving forward while another, lying down, poured in a hot fire; the distances so crawled over at one time were 30 or 35 yards in extent.

In this way the West Ridings and Yorkshires succeeded, during the forenoon, in getting within less than a quarter of a mile of the Boer position, while the Buffs and the Oxfordshires, conformably to the express orders of their divisional commander, remained lying down about 750 yards from the enemy. All the reserves were gradually pushed up into the firing line, even the three companies of the Gloucestershires, which had occupied Kitchener's Kopje, and were relieved there by a detachment of Kitchener's Horse.

Meanwhile the Highland Brigade of the ninth division had come into action, by order of Lord Kitchener, to the left of the sixth division, in the space between it and the Modder River. The 65th Howitzer Battery of the ninth division had been sent to reinforce the artillery on Gun Hill soon after 7 a.m.; of the two batteries of the sixth division which were already there, the Eighty-first Field Battery had been directed by Lord Kitchener, shortly after opening fire, to change position on to a small eminence to the north of Kitchener's Kopje, in order to prevent an attempt on the part of Cronje to break through at that point. All the batteries, after they had silenced the few hostile guns, directed their fire on the Boer entrenchments on the south bank, spreading their shrapnel fire over all the bush and undergrowth. The result was, however, very trifling, and did not prevent the Boers, who were in no way disconcerted, from concentrating the whole strength of their fire on the attacking infantry.

The Highland Brigade had moved off from its bivouac to the east of Paardeberg Drift towards 7.30 a.m., the order of march being the 1st Argyll and Sutherlands, the 2nd Black Watch, and the 2nd Seaforths. They advanced eastwards at a distance of 1½ miles from the enemy in one long, single row with four paces interval between each man, until the head of the Argylls was on a level with the artillery on Gun Hill, and behind the left wing of the sixth division. The column was then told to face to its left, and the whole brigade, with the exception of two companies of the Seaforths, which followed in rear of the left flank, advanced in one extended line of skirmishers, without supports or reserves, across the open plain towards the river. When within about a mile from the Boers the latter opened rifle fire upon the brigade, which, however, continued its advance without replying. When the Argylls reached the left wing of the sixth division, which was lying down about 800 yards from the enemy, they pushed themselves into the firing line of the Oxfordshires, but the other two battalions continued to advance without firing a shot, until within about 500 yards of the enemy, and not until then did they lie down and commence firing.

General Sir Henry Colvile, who commanded the ninth division, in describing this gallant advance of his Highlanders, has very aptly said that he did not believe he would ever again see anything finer or more inspiring than the advance of that thin line of skirmishers across the perfectly bare plain, under a hail of bullets from an invisible enemy. "The line became thinner and thinner," continues the general, "while the red-brown spots, which it left behind on the grass, became thicker and thicker. What brave men are capable of accomplishing the Highlanders did, only it appears that there are certain laws which fix the exact limit of loss, that a body of troops,

consisting of civilised soldiers, can stand, and which has nothing to do with fear. A battalion will advance under a storm of bullets up to a certain point without wavering; when it has reached that point, it is possible that the adversary's fire has slackened, but, if the gaps in its ranks be too great, the battalion will have already been brought to a standstill. I will not enter upon the difficult question as to whether open or closed formations are best for attack, but two things are irrevocably fixed, namely, that frontal attacks against entrenched troops, armed with a modern rifle, can never be carried through with one thin line, and that it is impossible to advance in close order unless the formation has plenty of depth so that gaps may be filled up."

As the whole brigade had been simultaneously extended in one thin line, which had a front of nearly two and a-half miles, its left wing extended considerably beyond the Boer position. Of this portion, which overlapped the adversary, several companies of the Seaforths crossed the Modder River under fire, and moved against the enemy's flank; they were afterwards reinforced by their two companies, which had been left in rear of the left wing of the brigade, and which had crossed the river somewhat lower down. These troops on the north bank of the river succeeded in getting within 300 yards of the hostile position during the course of the day. On the south bank, however, the Highland Brigade was unable to make any more considerable progress throughout the action, as it had no supports wherewith to reinforce the firing line, and carry forward the attack. The urgent entreaties of the brigadier, General MacDonald, for reinforcements could only be met by the despatch of half a battalion of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, too weak a force to infuse new life into the slackening fire of the Highlanders.

Matters were still worse in the case of the sixth division during the afternoon. About three o'clock a serious incident occurred which might have forced it to retreat, and would have rendered it possible for the Boers, had they been more resolute, to break through at that spot. While the sixth division, under the impression that the kopje situated on its right flank and rear was held by Kitchener's Horse, had its whole attention fixed on the action in front of it, a very hot fire was poured suddenly into its flank and rear from the hill in question. The detachment of Kitchener's Horse told off to hold it, had thoughtlessly left the kopje during the afternoon, and had ridden to Osfontein farm, which was close at hand, to water their horses, which were half perished with thirst. Just at that very moment there arrived a body of Boers, about 500 strong, with two guns, under de Wet, from Koffyfontein in the south. The whole detachment of Kitchener's Horse was captured after a brief resistance, and the Boers installed themselves on Kitchener's Kopje, opening a very effective fire on the flank and rear of the sixth division.

An officer of the divisional Staff hurriedly collected some mounted infantry, which was rambling about in rear of the front of the division, as well as the three companies of the Gloucestershires left behind as baggage escort. This weak force was extended back to back with the Yorkshires, and facing the kopje forming a semi-circle around it, thus protecting the Yorkshires in some degree at least, from an attack which would immediately threaten their rear. On this portion of the battle-field the English were nevertheless obliged to fight facing in two directions, a most uncomfortable situation, and one which turned the vigorously begun attack into a toilsome and dragging defensive action. Everybody was lying down close to the bare plain,

anxiously awaiting the approach of darkness, in order to seek for cover further to the rear. Late in the afternoon the firing began gradually to slacken, there being no more troops available to reinforce the firing line and to bring up ammunition. Individuals who attempted to fetch some generally paid the penalty with their lives.

The British infantry suffered greatly from the intensely hot musketry fire of the Boers, which was poured into it throughout the action "just as before the final charge at a good old Aldershot field day." The infantry had to face this fire for nearly twelve hours without food or water.

The men suffered terribly from thirst. Many British officers consider that to provide troops in action with water is most important, and almost as necessary as bringing up ammunition. The extent to which thirst is produced in modern battles in consequence of excitement is scarcely conceivable. A refreshing drink of water at the right moment is said to increase, often to an extraordinary degree, the fighting powers of the troops. It is essential, at the least, that each man should go into action with his water-bottle filled. The Boers generally kept large supplies of fresh drinking water ready in their positions.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NINETEENTH BRIGADE ON THE NORTH BANK.

The remainder of the ninth division, namely, the nineteenth brigade, and the 82nd Field Battery, met with no greater success on the north bank. The brigade had crossed the river at Paardeberg Drift with three of its battalions* and the battery† shortly after 9 a.m., and, quite unnoticed by the enemy, commenced a wide turning movement of his position, making very skilful use of the ground. The battalions came into action one after the other as they arrived on the scene, the first to do so being the 2nd Royal Canadians about 11.30 a.m., and they were followed by the 2nd Shropshires, and the 1st Gordons in the order named, the Royal Canadians forming the pivot flank of the movement. They extended for attack on the left, and next to the companies of the Seaforths which were engaged on the north bank of the Modder River. The small watercourse, which joins the

* The fourth battalion of the brigade, the 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, had been left behind at the bivouac ground south of Paardeberg Drift to guard the baggage.

† When the ninth division reached the river at Paardeberg Drift, the latter had risen suddenly, and was no longer fordable for infantry. The troops remained at first helpless on the bank, not knowing what to do, as the pontoon wagons and their teams had been given up, by order of the Commander-in-Chief, for purposes of supply. It was only by means of a very ingenious idea on the part of the senior Engineer officer on the spot that the passage could be effected at all during the morning, and even then with considerable delay. He had a strong rope carried across by a collapsible boat, which happened to be available, and the men passed over by it, after the force of the stream had been broken by several carts which were pushed into the river.

river where the latter bends towards the south, was strongly held by the Boers. The tactics were similar to those of the Highland Brigade; the battalions, while still out of range, formed one long, thin line of skirmishers, and advanced to within about 850 yards of the enemy before opening fire. Both volley firing and individual firing were employed. The advance of the brigade was supported by the 82nd Field Battery, which came into action on Signal Hill about 12.30 p.m., and directed an effective flanking fire on the Boers at the river bend.

This battery, however, which had rendered valuable aid at first to the infantry attack, soon ceased firing, as its shrapnel burst several times over the heads of the men of the Highland Brigade, who were in action on the south bank and in the river valley. In consequence of this the guns were directed against the laager which was situated further to the east.

When the defenders became aware of the turning movement of the Shropshires and Gordons, they changed front, and formed up parallel to the river bank, and at right angles to the Boers occupying the small watercourse, and between these men and the laager. Hence it happened that this attack became a purely frontal one.

Owing to lack of support from the rear the fire of the brigade was neither heavy, nor uniform, nor superior in effect, and this attack also came to a complete standstill about 2.30 p.m., although small portions of the firing line still attempted to advance.

Just at that time the ninth division received an order from Lord Kitchener to rush the Boer position with all available fresh troops. From his post with the artillery on the south bank he had gained the impression that a resolute bayonet charge was alone necessary to drive the adversary out of his positions. The distance, however, exceeded 700 yards, and there was no evidence whatever that the

fire of the brigade had had any effect, while, so far from its having been superior to that of the Boers, the contrary had rather shown itself to be the case. Colvile, nevertheless, thought a charge might succeed, but with heavy loss. He felt bound, however, to inform Kitchener* that, in his view, it was not necessary to storm the Boer position on that day, but merely to surround Cronje. Kitchener insisted on his order being obeyed, and his determination to carry the attack through was certainly right. But his attempt to drive the enemy from his position by shock and not by fire tactics showed that he, like most British officers, did not appreciate correctly the essence of the modern infantry fight. Otherwise he must have reflected that it was much too early to charge, and that the essential thing to be done was to strengthen the slackening fire of the nineteenth brigade, and to make its left wing approach to within such a distance from the Boers as to render it possible to bring their position in the watercourse under a more effective fire, and especially to enfilade it.

The half battalion of the 2nd Cornwalls,† which had been left as baggage guard, was all that was available in the shape of fresh troops, and to it alone did Colvile communicate the order to storm the watercourse which was very strongly held. After crossing the river the Cornwalls came into action in rear of the Royal Canadians, and reached their line by rushes and crawling. The other

* The Chief of the Staff wished to command in person all units down to and including battalions, and he issued his orders direct to the latter, ignoring the regulation channels of communication, and the divisional commanders. The consequence was that a strong feeling of resentment took possession of the divisional generals; they retired completely into the background, and, on this particular day, were even more passive than usual. Their leadership was destitute of all agreeable responsibility and initiative; and this was particularly noticeable in the attitude of the commander of the cavalry division, who was otherwise so alert.

† The battalion was at dinner when it received the order to attack. Colonel Aldworth allowed his men to finish their meal quietly, which caused a delay of about 45 minutes. But the battalion, refreshed by its food, was certainly far better prepared to go into action.

battalions of the brigade, apparently awaiting orders, remained lying down, but the Royal Canadians joined the Cornwalls of their own accord, without being ordered to do so. Both battalions then crawled along together without firing until within 500 yards of the enemy's position, when bayonets were fixed. All at once, apparently by signal, the whole line rose and charged with loud cheers. It already seemed as if the assault, which was delivered with uncommon resolution, would succeed, when the line, which had been getting thinner and thinner, suddenly staggered under the devastating fire of the Boers, and threw itself down. The losses suffered during the few moments which the charge lasted were tolerably heavy. and in the case of the half battalion of the 2nd Cornwalls, they even amounted to 22 per cent. Their gallant commander, Lieut.-Colonel Aldworth, had fallen at the head of his death-defying men. Kitchener having insisted, however prematurely, on the charge being delivered, it was Colvile's duty to arrange for this being done uniformly by the whole brigade and not by weak portions of it.

It was then 5 p.m., and the isolated advance of the 19th brigade on the north bank had met with the same fate as the individual attacks of the sixth division, and the Highland Brigade on the south bank during the forenoon. A weak fire, which gradually slackened, was kept up with difficulty until darkness set in, and under cover of the night, the troops, which were utterly exhausted by hunger, thirst, and their excessive exertions, were withdrawn behind the kopjes situated further to the rear.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOUNTED INFANTRY AND THE EIGHTEENTH BRIGADE IN THE RIVER VALLEY TO THE EAST OF THE LAAGER.

A strong body of mounted infantry, under Hannay, had been holding the cattle drift to the north of Kitchener's Kopje since the early morning to prevent the Boers from escaping eastwards. The remainder of the mounted infantry was dispersed over the whole battle-field, some of it being on the north bank with the ninth division, and some on the south bank with the sixth division, Lord Kitchener having ordered it in the early part of the day, before the infantry had come up, to surround the Boers on the north-west, south, and east.

When the sixth division was forming for attack, Colonel Hannay advanced on both banks of the river against the Boers, who occupied the small watercourses to the east of the laager. The fighting here was at long range, and not very heavy, as Lord Kitchener's orders were to wait for the two battalions of the eighteenth brigade, namely, the Welch and Essex, which were to be sent in support, before making a general attack. When noon, however, had passed, and the battalions had not yet appeared, Colonel Hannay told his orderly officer to represent to Lord Kitchener the impossibility of the mounted infantry alone making the attack which, in his opinion, could only result in the useless sacrifice of his men. Lord Kitchener received this message about 1.30 p.m. when he was visibly excited by the attack of the sixth division making no

progress, and he sent express orders to Colonel Hannay to storm the laager at once, with the mounted infantry alone if necessary, cost what it might.

Hannay thereupon ordered Colonel de Lisle to attack with the mounted infantry, and he himself collected 50 or 60 men, who were in rear of the firing line, and ordered them to mount. He rode with this handful through his own firing line against the Boer entrenchments; when about 300 yards away from them his horse was shot, but he got up, and hurried on foot after his men until he was killed, pierced by numerous bullets, barely 200 yards from the hostile position. Of his gallant party only two returned, the others being either killed or wounded; some, including the adjutant, were captured, as their horses, although wounded, had still sufficient strength to penetrate into the Boer lines. The charge of such a handful of men, magnificent as it was on their part, could not have produced a decisive result, yet it enabled the firing line to approach to within about 350 yards of the enemy, as the Boers had directed their fire, for the time being, exclusively on the horsemen. But the firing line, from its vicinity to the Boers, suffered heavy loss, and, as it was unsupported, it was soon withdrawn in a northerly direction under cover of some kopjes.

The two battalions of the eighteenth brigade, which were so anxiously awaited, had been, meanwhile, diverted elsewhere. In pursuance of their instructions to attack the left flank of the Boers by advancing along the river valley, they were passing close to the north of Kitchener's Kopje, making a circuit eastwards, when artillery fire was opened upon them from the heights to the north of Osfontein Farm, which were occupied by about 500 men of the enemy with some guns, who were the first reinforcements to arrive from Bloemfontein.

The 81st Battery had come into action to the

north of Kitchener's Kopje, and at once directed its fire on these hostile guns, which were soon silenced. At the same time several companies of the Welch Regiment hastened in that direction both to protect the battery, and the rear of the mounted infantry which was in action, while the remaining companies of the two battalions of the 18th brigade took up a position under cover in a dry watercourse near the cattle drift. The cavalry also extended some dismounted men on the heights at Koodoes Rand Drift against Boers on the hills south of the drift, while its two batteries of horse artillery opened fire on the Boer guns. These measures prevented the further advance of the hostile detachment. When Boer riflemen suddenly appeared on Kitchener's Kopje in the afternoon, and seriously endangered the 81st Battery, some more companies were deployed against the hill, and a large proportion of both these battalions was expended in several directions. This unexpected fight entangled much of the 18th brigade and prevented it from attacking the Boer flank. As at Kitchener's Kopje it shows the scouting so necessary in action was faulty.

Kelly-Kenny, perceiving the unfortunate issue of the fight of the mounted infantry to the east of the laager, sent orders, about 4 p.m., to the 18th brigade to cross the river at the cattle drift at once, and to attack the Boer laager from the east. Only three companies of the Welch regiment were available, which, together with the Essex regiment, crossed the river at the point ordered. After reaching the top of the north bank, the Welchmen were extended in three lines; the first line advanced with ten paces interval between each man towards the Boer laager, and, when within 1,600 yards from the enemy, a hot fire was poured into it; the second and third lines reinforced the front one, and the Essex Regiment followed in support under cover of the river bed.

The Welch companies managed easily to approach within about 750 yards of the adversary without having been drawn into a serious musketry action at the longer ranges, but now, instead of opening a brisk fire, they were ordered to fix bayonets. Notwithstanding the long distance the Welchmen dashed forward with loud cheers, while the Essex regiment remained quietly under cover in the bed of the river. The isolated attack of the three companies met with the same fate as had that of the Royal Canadians and Cornwalls a short time previously, and the same thing happened in both cases; the men charged courageously for some hundreds of yards, and then the attack collapsed under the fire of the Boers, who were still in no degree shaken. A quarter of a mile from the enemy the remnants of the gallant companies threw themselves down, and waited for nightfall, while the Essex regiment remained under cover in a watercourse without taking any part in the fighting.

When darkness had fallen the two battalions wished to retire to the south bank, but their retreat was cut off by a Boer detachment from Kitchener's Kopje, which had occupied the cattle drift. As it was getting dark the 81st Battery, and its escort, had been withdrawn from their advanced position to Gun Hill, and the way to the drift was thus opened to the Boers. The Welch and Essex regiments bivouacked, therefore, several thousand yards to the east of the laager on the north bank.

Two officers, who had swum across the river, reported to Headquarters the situation of these battalions. The cavalry remained in possession of the heights between Koodoes Rand Drift and Kameelfontein; its small share in the fighting on the 18th has been explained by its having been fully occupied with the enemy advancing from the east, and that it could not have done more than

watch the country to the north-east of the Boer laager, in order to prevent Cronje from breaking through there.

In every undecided action, such as Paardeberg, troops will be seen remaining until night in the positions they have won. When so near the enemy, to retire by day will hardly be possible with modern firearms; it would mean certain ruin. Victory will not be gained until the next day, and will incline to that side which has most endurance or fresh forces. Darkness will be utilised either to relieve exhausted troops by fresh ones, or as in this case to withdraw them. Gravelotte was undecided in the evening on the German right. The French, beaten on their right, evacuated in the night their positions on their left, while the exhausted 7th and 8th German Corps, facing these, were relieved by the fresher 2nd Corps.

The total British loss at Paardeberg in killed, wounded, and missing exceeded 1,200 men, of whom 67 were officers, while that of the Boers is said to have been approximately 300 men. At nightfall, after more than twelve hours' fighting, the English found themselves in the same positions from which they had started, in the morning, to attack, and they could not have prevented Cronje from breaking through with his horsemen during the night of February 18th-19th in the direction of Kitchener's Kopje, and joining hands with de Wet. But the women, children, and all the baggage must then have been left behind in the laager, and, besides, the Boers were too exhausted for the moment to carry out such an enterprise. Cronje hoped, moreover, that the reinforcements, which had already arrived to the east and south-east of the laager, as well as those to be expected from Natal and Bloemfontein, would soon release him from his difficult situation.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SURRENDER OF CRONJE.

Lord Roberts had received a report from Lord Kitchener at Paardeberg, during the afternoon of the 18th, in which the latter described the state of affairs on the morning of that day, and urgently requested reinforcements. In consequence of this the fourteenth brigade, and the artillery of the seventh division, namely, the 18th, 62nd, and 75th Batteries, started on the same night between nine and ten o'clock from Jacobsdal for Paardeberg, where they arrived between four and five o'clock on the afternoon of the following day. They had covered this long distance in 19 hours, a performance which surpassed even that of the ninth division. The Brigade of Guards was sent from Modder River Station to Klip Drift to protect the communications, and it remained there for the next few days, while the remainder of the seventh division, namely, the fifteenth brigade, was left for a while at Jacobsdal for the same purpose. The Commander-in-Chief and the Headquarter Staff left Jacobsdal at four o'clock on the morning of the 19th, and reached Paardeberg about six hours afterwards. Lord Roberts was met there by the Chief of the Staff, with the announcement that a 24 hours' armistice had been concluded with the Boers, for the purpose of burying the dead and attend-

ing to the wounded, but, after a brief consultation with the generals present he rescinded this agreement.*

The Commander-in-Chief resolved, after he had personally reconnoitred the Boer position, to make no further attack, but only to draw closer the investing line of infantry, and to compel the Boers to surrender by an artillery bombardment as well as through hunger.

It had been discovered, in the morning, that the west wing of the Boers on the north bank had evacuated its strong position at the bend of the river, and had taken up a new one about 1,100 yards further back. The nineteenth brigade at once occupied the former ground, and got within some 750 yards of the enemy's new entrenchments. A party of Boers, two or three hundred strong, under Commandant Fronemann, had penetrated, at an early hour, through the gap on the south-eastern portion of the battle-field, between the thirteenth and the eighteenth brigades; this gap was situated to the north of Kitchener's Kopje, which was held by de Wet, and Fronemann had joined the latter. Cronje could have done the same at that time with all his mounted men.

The Commander-in-Chief issued orders at midday to open fire on the Boer laager, and the artillery of the seventh division, which had hurried on in front of its infantry, reached Gun Hill at noon.† Its batteries came into action to the left of the 65th Howitzer Battery, while the batteries of the sixth division, the 76th and 81st, which had hitherto been there, took up a position somewhat to the south of the hill, and facing Kitchener's Kopje; they then opened fire against the enemy on the latter, at a range of more than 2,200 yards. The four naval guns,‡ namely, two 4·7-inch and two 12 pounders, which arrived on the evening of the 19th, were sent to Gun Hill on the

* Appendix VII. † Map 8.

‡ The remainder d'd not arrive until the 20th.

right of the artillery of the seventh division, so that 28 guns were now concentrated there, while the 82nd Battery remained on Signal Hill on the north bank. The Headquarter Camp was pitched on the south bank near Paardeberg Drift, and the field hospitals were erected not far from it. The third cavalry brigade, under Gordon, rejoined its Headquarters on this day from Kimberley, whereas the first brigade, under Porter, did not follow until the 22nd.* In obedience to a heliographic order from Lord Kitchener, Broadwood's brigade, the second, had crossed to the south bank at Paardeberg Drift early in the morning in order to drive the Boers from Kitchener's Kopje. General de Wet had been in heliographic communication with Cronje since the previous day, and implored him repeatedly to break through with his horsemen only, and to join hands with him. General Broadwood endeavoured to approach the hill from the south, but as he "found it too strongly held to be able to justify an attack," he retired and bivouacked to the south of Paardeberg Drift. The horses were still so exhausted, that it was impossible to trot away from the artillery fire on the kopje, when the brigade was making its flank march.

The Gloucestershire regiment, which had been charged with the duty of containing de Wet's commando on Kitchener's Kopje, had suffered extremely throughout the 19th from the enemy's fire, and a fresh attack was, therefore, made towards evening on the hill, with Lord Roberts' consent. The battalion tried to drive off the Boers with the bayonet, and it succeeded in dislodging them from a small projecting summit, where it entrenched itself when darkness set in. The battalion withdrew,

* Its late arrival is explained by the fact that it did not receive General French's telegram to Kimberley to follow at once until the 21st, owing to some oversight, which has not been explained.

however, during the night, to its former position in accordance with orders from Headquarters. The bombardment of the Boer laager increased in intensity during the latter part of the afternoon, and created some havoc among the cattle and the carts. A fire broke out in several places in the wagon park towards 5 p.m., and a violent explosion occurred shortly afterwards, most of the artillery ammunition being blown up. There was no loss of human life, as the Boers, their wives, and children were completely protected by their hollow shelters from the British guns. The Boers endeavoured at first to reply with their rifles to the artillery fire from their entrenchments, but they abandoned the attempt, as soon as they had recognised its futility.

On February 20th, and during the preceding night, some changes were made in the disposition of the troops, the eighteenth brigade rejoining its division on the south bank, while its place was taken by the fourteenth brigade, which had arrived the day before. As the latter was marching, under cover of the night, between Kitchener's Kopje and the Boer entrenchments, in order to reach its new destination, it lost the road and stumbled right up against the Boer position on the river; a hot rifle fire was suddenly poured into the brigade at very short range, which caused it to suffer a good deal of loss. It reached its new position in considerable disorder, and with the loss of some of its carts, several of the animals having been shot, while the drivers had run away.

The 76th, 81st, and 65th (Howitzer) Batteries, together with two 4·7-inch naval guns, crossed to the north bank at Paardeberg Drift, and took up a new position on Signal Hill close to the 82nd Battery. The six other naval guns* remained on Gun Hill near the artillery of

* Two 4·7 inch and four 12 pounders.

the seventh division. The Boer position and laager were again bombarded from 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. by order of the Commander-in-Chief, but, considering that the ranges were by this time accurately known, the result was by no means brilliant, the shrapnel bursting for the most part too high. Fire broke out several times in the Boer camp, it is true, but it did not spread; the stench made by the lyddite shells was felt all the more, however, because the atmosphere was already horribly poisoned by the corpses and dead animals, which decomposed rapidly in consequence of the heat.* The Boer guns could not reply, as they had no ammunition left after the explosion of the previous day, but, towards evening, a number of Boer riflemen crept closer to the artillery on Gun Hill, and made themselves unpleasantly felt, although they fired only at long and medium ranges. Infantry was, therefore, pushed forward to protect the guns; it worked its way nearer to the enemy's positions by using the spade, and drew the investment line closer. The two cavalry brigades bivouacked on the heights south of Koodoes Rand Drift, Gordon's brigade, with two batteries of horse artillery, having driven off from there the Boers under Commandant Vloriman, who thereupon joined de Wet on Kitchener's Kopje. The cavalry occupied the Koodoes Rand and Makauw's Drifts.

The Commando on Kitchener's Kopje under de Wet had been gradually increased to 2,000 men. As the Boers posted on the hill continually threatened the right flank and rear of the sixth division, it was resolved to re-capture this important point. The task was entrusted to General French, who decided to attack from the south, and to drive the Boers towards the river valley on to the rifles of the sixth division, which

* It had not been possible to bury those who had fallen on the 18th.

was already there. When the cavalry division began to encircle the kopje, about 9 a.m. on February 21st, from a south-westerly and south-easterly direction, the enemy evacuated his position without letting himself be drawn into a fight, and galloped off towards the east. The cavalry horses were so completely exhausted that the division was unable to capture any prisoners, and it immediately lost touch again with the enemy. Kitchener's Kopje was then occupied by the Yorkshires, which at last completed the investment of Cronje, and deprived him of any possibility of breaking through. Negotiations took place between Lord Roberts and General Cronje in the afternoon of the same day, concerning the unmolested withdrawal of all the women and children from the laager, but they led to no result. *

Lord Kitchener left the British camp early on the 22nd, escorted by a detachment of mounted infantry, and went first to Naauwpoort in order to arrange for the troops in the north of Cape Colony, and south of the Orange River, assuming the offensive towards the north. On that date the infantry succeeded, with the help of the spade,† in pushing further forward along both banks, the nineteenth brigade on the north bank approaching within 550 yards of the enemy. The troops remained under cover by day, and executed their trench work at night. Although a Boer was scarcely ever to be seen in the river valley beneath, yet an English soldier had only to raise his head a little above the parapet, in order to be at once reminded of the proximity of the adversary by a well-aimed shot. As it had become known that many Boers left their entrenchments after dark, in order to obtain their provisions from the laager, this was henceforth subjected to a hot artillery fire every evening, the guns

* Appendix VII. † The tools belonged to the Engineer companies.

having been accurately laid by daylight. The state of affairs in the laager became worse and worse; the women and children suffered terribly, and several of the Boers, being sick of fighting, demanded of Cronje that hostilities should cease. A scarcity of provisions began to make itself felt, and the atmosphere became gradually so pestiferous in consequence of the exhalations from the bodies of dead animals, that it was hardly possible to remain in the narrow excavations. Many of the Boers attempted to slip through the English lines at night, or else deserted to the British, and the internal disorganisation increased more and more during the next few days. It became also almost impossible for Cronje to direct operations, as the river was much swollen in consequence of the rain,* and the communication between both banks was thereby rendered very much more difficult.

Lord Methuen moved with the remainder of the first division to Kimberley, which became the principal depôt after February 22nd; this set free the fifteenth brigade, which had hitherto been left at Jacobsdal, and enabled it to be sent on to Klip Kraal Drift. The cavalry division became once more complete by the arrival of the first brigade, under Porter, and the balloon detachment reached Paardeberg in the evening.

The balloon ascended early on the following morning, the 23rd, about a mile to the east of Paardeberg, and rendered quite excellent service during the following days by observing the enemy, and it was from the balloon detachment that detailed and accurate information concerning the Boer position in the river valley below was first received. The attempts of the Boers to bring down the balloon by means of rifle fire were unsuccessful.

The loss of Kitchener's Kopje, which was tactically so

* The scorching heat had been almost insupportable up to the 22nd, but the continuous rain on the four succeeding days was most refreshing.

important, had been a heavy blow for the Boers, and its influence on the issue of the struggle had not escaped de Wet, who decided to endeavour to re-capture it on February 23rd. The position consists of a group of heights which form a rectangle, but those on the south side are not so high as those on the north. The ground in front of the south side was covered with low bush for a distance of nearly 900 yards.

The Boers, who were about 2,000 strong with several guns, advanced in three groups, which were to approach as close as possible to the British position under cover of darkness in order to attack at daybreak. The southern group, under General Philip Botha, was to attack Kitchener's Kopje from the south-east, while the centre and northern bodies were to advance against the hills situated further towards the north. Botha's force of 1,200 men with two guns, however, was late, and was not able to deploy for attack until about 7 a.m. When the Yorkshires, who occupied the kopje, perceived the long, loose line of skirmishers approaching, they opened fire at a range of 1,500 yards, but the Boers, advancing in widely extended order by rushes, which were interrupted by their firing, managed to reach the edge of the bush without serious loss.

The Yorkshires were reinforced towards 8.30 a.m. by the Buffs, who came up on their right, and by two batteries, which came into action to the right rear of the latter, whereupon the main body of the enemy retreated in all haste, and disappeared shortly afterwards behind a fold of the ground, the two other groups, which were further to the north, soon following their example. A body of Boers, however, under Commandant Theunissen, still advanced through the bush; judging by their hot fire they were estimated to be several hundred strong, and the firing continued to be tolerably heavy until about 1 p.m.,

but without decisive result to either side.* The two remaining battalions of the thirteenth brigade then advanced to the south of Gun Hill against the left flank of the Boers, and the latter hoisted the white flag. It was then discovered that there had been, all the time, in the bush only 87 Boers, against whom a whole brigade had been deployed. They had not retreated, because that would have meant, as they afterwards declared, certain death. The retreating enemy was not pursued, as the cavalry and horse artillery had not been able to appear on the field, they having sent their horses to graze owing to the want of sufficient forage. †

No events of importance occurred during the next few days, but the vigilance of the sentries was increased both by day and by night, as a considerable number of the Boers had managed, in the dark, to slip through the British lines, which were constantly being drawn closer by pushing forward the shelter trenches. The floods in the river caused by the heavy rain storms were so far favourable to the Boers, that they were able to let the many hundreds of dead animals, whose bodies made the laager an actual pest house, be carried away down stream. ‡

* The German Military Attaché with the British forces witnessed the fight from the kopje, and expressed his opinion in the following terms:—"Even with strong glasses it was impossible to see individuals, and, therefore, no target was ordered for the English volleys. The Yorkshires had hastily thrown up parapets of stone, and . . . as soon as a man raised his head a little above the parapet in order to look about, bullets fell all around him, but it was impossible to see whence they came. The invisibility of the enemy had the same depressing effect as in all the other actions. . . . The most striking thing about the fight was the complete lack of unity of leadership. Every battalion, and every battery acted independently; nobody assumed the chief command. As regards infantry fire-tactics there were none at all, and stimulating initiative on the part of the officers was wanting; they evidently endeavoured to infuse contempt for the efforts of the Boers by their total indifference of manner."

† During the preceding days it had only been possible to issue quarter rations of forage.

‡ The Modder River was thereby completely contaminated, which was all the more unpleasant, as the British troops to the west of the Boer

The river having fallen somewhat by midday on the 25th, some of the Boer leaders, in response to their urgent representations, extracted a reluctant consent from Cronje that they should make an attempt, with their Commandos, that evening to break through in a south-easterly direction. They had become so desperate by having the miserable state of their women and children continually before their eyes, that they preferred death to remaining any longer spectators of their wretched condition.

The men who were to take part in the attempt were assembling about 6 p.m. on the north bank not far from the laager, but, before they were all collected, the water suddenly rose again, and remained high for the two succeeding days, which made it impossible to cross. Disappointed, and disheartened, every man returned to his post. A Council of War was held on the following day, when the men of the Orange Free State declared that they intended to lay down their arms at once and surrender to the British, with or without Cronje's consent. The latter saw himself compelled to agree, but obtained that the surrender should be postponed for one day longer, in order that all those who wished it might try and escape captivity by breaking through the English lines.

The next day, the 27th, was the anniversary of Majuba, and for this reason Colvile had obtained permission from Lord Roberts to make a fresh attempt to storm the laager from the west side, with the 19th brigade, in the early morning. On the 26th it became the

laager were obliged to get their water supply from the river. But their health remained good for the time being, thanks to the invigorating atmosphere, and the number of those suffering from dysentery and typhoid was very small (126 on Feb. 27). It is, however, probable that this bad water, coupled with the great exertions and scarcity of supplies, rendered the troops much more susceptible to the typhoid epidemic which broke out later in Bloemfontein.

turn of the Royal Canadians for duty in the advanced line of trenches, and upon them, therefore, devolved the task of making the assault. These trenches were about 550 yards from the Boers, and, after striking the river bed exactly at right angles, turned off in a north-easterly direction, their total length being nearly 900 yards.

Six companies, the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th, numbering in all little more than 500 men, occupied them, while No. 1 company was in a trench on the south bank, which flanked the others to some extent; No. 2 company was held in reserve, about 250 yards in rear of the right wing. Immediately to the left of the Royal Canadians, two companies of the Gordons occupied the north-eastern portion of the trenches, the remainder of their battalion being kept in reserve in a trench some 300 yards behind the front line. The Shropshires and two companies of the Black Watch were held in readiness about 1,400 yards in rear of the extreme left wing of the brigade. The bank in front of the right wing of the Royal Canadians was covered with low, thick bush, while the ground in front of their left flank, towards the Boer trenches, was quite open and afforded no cover whatever.

The Royal Canadians were to move before daybreak, and under cover of the darkness, from the advanced line of trenches concentrically against the enemy's position, and, in the event of their being perceived by the Boers, they were to lie down, and entrench themselves. The six companies were to advance simultaneously in two lines, with two paces interval between each man, and 15 yards between the lines, of which the front one was to march with fixed bayonets, while the other was to have the rifles slung, the men carrying the entrenching tools in their hands. A small party of

engineers was to accompany the second line on either flank.

The companies moved off, in the formation which had been ordered, at 2.15 a.m., and covered the first quarter of a mile unmolested, but, when they were only a hundred yards from the enemy, a terrific fire was poured into them. Fortunately some shots, which had been discharged prematurely, had warned the firing line, and all the men were lying down when the shooting became heavy. The front line at once opened fire, while the second one commenced to dig. It was then about 3 a.m., when an incident occurred on the left flank which threatened to jeopardise the success of the whole enterprise; somebody in the firing line, whose identity has never been discovered, called out loudly in a tone of command that the whole was to retire taking the wounded along with it. Thereupon all the companies, with the exception of Nos. 7 and 8 on the right wing, which had not heard the order, retreated half crawling, half running, to the trench from which the start had been made. At daybreak the 7th and 8th companies alone were well entrenched in the trenches which had been quickly made by the second line and the engineers. The British loss had been trifling, as the Boers fired for the most part too high.

The fighting continued until about 6 a.m., when the Boers who were opposite the Royal Canadians, threw down their arms, and surrendered. Shortly afterwards a large white flag appeared over the Boer laager, and General Cronje offered to surrender unconditionally with the whole of his force.* His authority no longer sufficed

* The following letter from General Cronje to Lord Roberts was brought in under cover of a flag of truce:—

"HEADQUARTER LAAGER, MODDER RIVER,
"*February 27th*, 1900.

"I have the honour to inform you herewith that the Council of War,

to make the Boers continue their resistance; their strength had been broken less by the bombardment, which had not had much effect, than by hunger and the horrors of the pestiferous laager. The number of prisoners amounted to 4,048 men, inclusive of 195 wounded; of the former number 2,613 were Transvaalers and 1,435 Orange Free Staters. Previous to February 27th about three or four hundred Boers had either deserted, or else had broken through the English lines. The British also captured four Krupp guns and two machine guns, all without their breech-pieces, together with a large number of rifles of the most varied types with ammunition and numerous carts.

During the ten days' fighting the Boers are stated to have lost 74 men killed, and 195 men wounded,* while the British loss amounted to 268 killed, 1,367 wounded, and 232 missing, these figures including all the casualties occasioned by the fighting which immediately preceded February 18th.

The surrender of the Boers was carried out without incident and in a very dignified manner, Lord Roberts greeting brave General Cronje with the complimentary words: "You have made a gallant defence, Sir." He then entertained him in his own tent, while the troops followed the good example of the Commander-in-Chief, making a point of providing their half-starved prisoners with food and drink, each man sharing, in the most liberal

---

which was held yesterday evening, decided on the unconditional surrender of all the invested forces; under the circumstances we are forced to this. We throw ourselves, therefore, upon the mercy of Her Majesty the Queen. As a token of surrender a white flag will be hoisted this morning at 6 o'clock. The Council of War begs that you will at once order the cessation of all hostilities, so that further loss of human life may be avoided.

"I have the honour, &c."

* Exclusive of the losses of de Wet's force.

manner, the little he had, while the Boers were also treated with every consideration in other respects.*

In view of the many errors, disseminated at the time by a badly informed Press throughout the whole world, as to the conduct of the war by the English, it is the duty of a truth-loving historical account, compiled from a knowledge of the actual circumstances, to lay stress upon the fact that the behaviour of the British was as chivalrous and humane as that of the Boers always was, so long as they were opposed by the regular Boer forces, which were distinguishable as such. But, after the occupation of Bloemfontein, the loosely organised and badly disciplined militia forces of the Boers broke up. Those still in the field were often merely irregulars, and no longer recognisable externally as combatants. By degrees they adopted guerilla tactics which, by obliterating the distinction between a really combatant force and a hostile population, were bound naturally to arouse a constantly increasing feeling of bitterness among the British troops, which were often menaced, and this not only explains much of their severity but also justifies it.

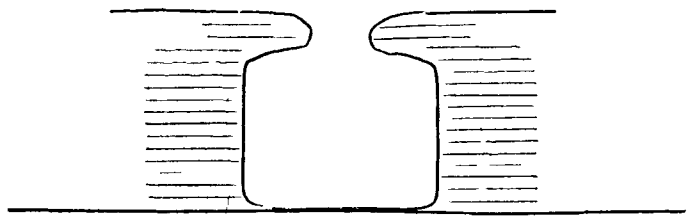
If, therefore, the English authorities subsequently adopted on several occasions increasingly severe reprisals, which often made their conduct of the war appear harsh, yet they did so, in the majority of cases, only in accordance with their duty, and the justifiable protection of the lives of those under their command. Military history teaches, besides, that the bitterness aroused on both sides during a war increases in proportion to its duration, while humane and chivalrous feeling becomes, of course, blunted.

Isolated cases of gross breaches of the customs of war certainly did occur, especially during the final stage of

* A German officer, who fought on the side of the Boers, and was taken prisoner, states: "The treatment meted out to us by the British officers and soldiers was thoroughly friendly and humane, and not only the officers but also the Tommies behaved as perfect gentlemen towards the prisoners."

the struggle. But this will happen with the best disciplined troops in the world, and was, in this instance, all the less to be wondered at, if we remember that the Colonial levies could not possess the same soldier-like kindness of feeling as the regular troops. Malpractices on the part of rough individuals can never be altogether avoided in war. But it would be utterly unjust to make the British commanders or the whole English nation responsible for this.*

The entrenchments, which may, perhaps, be better described as loop-holes, prepared by the Boers are deserving of notice; they were perpendicular and very narrow excavations in the ground, from two to three yards deep, and were hollowed out in order to give protection against shrapnel fire.



Generally speaking there were one or two men in each of these holes, and they fired, as a rule, across the natural ground after the excavated earth had been removed; here and there parapets were made of sandbags. Judging by the utensils left behind, the Boers had latterly lived exclusively in these entrenchments, the tops of which were closed with blankets or empty sacks as protection against the rain. It was only in isolated places, especially on the

* A German eye-witness, who visited the Boer laager immediately after the capitulation, found there "numbers of Mauser cartridges with the points of the bullets cut off, as well as sporting cartridges of every description, the bullets of which had been cut into a mushroom shape ⏚ by means of a knife or other instruments."

north bank, that the loop-holes formed a more continuous line; elsewhere they were frequently constructed very far apart from one another, so that there could be no question of any kind of fire discipline; on the contrary the two occupants of each hole were left entirely to their own resources. Even in the case of well disciplined troops it would have been impossible to get men out of such places to attack, and cover of this description is, therefore, only suitable for a purely passive defence.

The captive Boers were marched under escort on February 28th to Klip Drift, and from there to Modder River Station, whence they were forwarded by rail to Cape Town, and then embarked for conveyance to St. Helena. The moral effect of Cronje's capitulation on the Boers still in the field was very great. General de Wet has written as follows on this subject: "It would have been too much to expect from General Cronje, the gallant hero, that he should leave his big laager in the lurch, and break through alone with his horsemen; he believed that, as a man, he must either stand or fall by it, and he certainly did not think of the consequences of his capture; he did not know that he would destroy the warlike spirit of the burghers, and that this catastrophe would be, to a great extent, the cause of an indescribable panic among all the laagers in the field, not only there, but also at Colesberg, Stormberg, and Ladysmith."

"For when a man like Cronje, who was extolled above all, allowed himself to be captured, how was an ordinary burgher to have the courage to persevere?"

"On every countenance was dejection and despondency, and these—I am not saying too much—exercised their influence until the end of the war."

The immediate result of the surrender of Cronje was the abandonment of the siege of Ladysmith, and the retreat of all the Boers in the north of Cape Colony.

Ladysmith was relieved by General Buller on March 1st, and, about the same time, General Gatacre occupied Stormberg Junction, whereby railway communication was restored between the eastern and western portions of Cape Colony. The English forces in Cape Colony simultaneously assumed the offensive against the Boers retreating behind the Orange River, Colonel Brabant advancing from Dordrecht by Jamestown on Aliwal North, General Gatacre from Stormberg by Burghersdorp on Bethulie, and General Clements from Arundel on Norval's Pont.


Sketch Map
to illustrate the
RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY
AND
BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG
Scale of Miles
Macfarlane's Sta.
Dronfield
Kimberley
Alexandersfontein
Olifantsfontein
Kameelfontein
Spytfontein
Oefontein
Abrm's Dam
Magersfontein
Beejespan
Modder River Sta.
Jacobsdal
Wegdraai
De Dam
Rondam
Blaauwbeck
Blaauwbank
Ramdam
Belmont
Koffyfontein
Winter Rock
Riet R.
Modder R.
Poplar Grove
Oefontein
Paardeberg
Stinkfontein
Driefontein
Petrusberg
Bloemfontein
Faure smith
Orange River Sta.
Signal Hill
Gun Hill
Kitchener's Kopje
Klip Drift
Wegdraai Drift
Watervaal Drift
De Kiel Drift
Kimberley
Bloemfontein
Jacobsdal
Faure smith
Orange R.
Blue R.
Riet R.
Modder R.

CHAPTER XXI.

Comments on the Fighting at Paardeberg, and General Remarks.

The resolve of Lord Kitchener to push matters rapidly to a crisis, and to attack the surrounded Boers without loss of time was obviously thoroughly sound, but careful preparations should have been made, for it was a case of making a pre-determined attack on an adversary already in position, and well entrenched. The divisions should have been told off to definite points of attack, and their objectives should have been clearly defined both as regards time and place, in order that unity of action might be assured. The morning could have been employed in bringing the divisions on to their ground, and in letting them thoroughly reconnoitre beforehand that portion of the enemy's position which each was to attack; this was all the more necessary as it was clearly desirable to allow the troops, which were exhausted by their uninterrupted and very tiring marching, to get some more rest and a meal before commencing the attack.

A most careful reconnaissance of the Boer position should have been followed by all the available guns pouring in a heavy and carefully ordered fire* before the

* The British artillery fire was so ineffective mainly because the reconnaissance was faulty, and the position of the Boer entrenchments, concealed in the low bush, was not known.

infantry advanced to the decisive attack, which should have been carried out on both banks simultaneously. If it had appeared to be too risky to carry out the attack by day across the plain, which was completely devoid of cover, the troops might have been brought up on the night of February 18th-19th to within effective range of the Boer position, and the attack could have been commenced at daybreak on the 19th.

Instead of such a carefully planned course of action, several isolated attacks were made without sufficient artillery support. Brigades, and even battalions, were brought into action singly, and there resulted three different attacks, completely separated from one another by place and time; they had no connection whatever with each other, and for this reason alone they had in them the germ of failure. The mobile Boers were, at the same time, enabled to move their forces from parts of the battle-field, where they were not very seriously threatened, to the decisive points, where they could appear in strength. These errors are to be explained by various circumstances, but especially by Lord Kitchener underrating the moral strength of his adversary. According to his view it was only requisite to make a resolute attack in order to induce the Boers to lay down their arms. When he reconnoitred the enemy's position early in the morning, he turned to the officers who accompanied him, and, drawing out his watch, said: "Gentlemen! it is now half past six; at ten o'clock we shall be in possession of the enemy's laager, and at half past ten General French will march for Bloemfontein with the cavalry." His Staff also shared his view.* Similar illusions about the adversary will recur in every

* Major Watson, A.D.C. to Lord Kitchener, wrote to Lord Cromer at Cairo on the 19th: "It really seemed as if Cronje had no loophole of escape left, and that he would have to surrender within a few hours. But not one of us had ever imagined what a determined resistance the enemy had decided to make, or the extent to which he had, in a short time, thrown up cover and shelter trenches. . . ."

war. When the Prussian Guards were ordered to make their premature attack on St. Privat, on August 18th, 1870, the general commanding them erroneously imagined that the village was only occupied by weak bodies of the French, which had been already defeated by the Ninth Army Corps, but which had been again led forward. As a matter of fact, however, it was the quite fresh Sixth French Army Corps which was there. General von Steinmetz lay under a similar delusion on the same day at Gravelotte, when he ordered Hartmann's cavalry division, about 4 p.m., to advance across the Mance Ravine at Point du Jour in pursuit of the French, who were, in fact, by no means shaken.

When it became apparent that there were serious difficulties in the way of breaking down the enemy's resistance, Lord Kitchener hurried matters on with a vengeance; impressed with the one idea to get possession of the Boer laager as soon as possible, he allowed himself to be led astray, to the extent of throwing the battalions singly into action, and sacrificing Colonel Hannay's gallant band.* According to his own showing he, like most of the senior British officers, had had no practice whatever

* The surprising phenomenon that the command in the battle was not exercised by Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny, the senior officer present, but by Lord Kitchener, a very much younger major general, is explained by the peculiar regulations concerning seniority, which were remarked during the war. "Local rank," that is to say, temporary promotion, was granted throughout the campaign. Lord Roberts was empowered to promote any officer, whatever his real rank, to a higher one, and to give him a command over the heads of others, should this be desirable on military grounds. In both instances, however, such promotion was only temporary, and was valid merely during the duration of employment in the theatre of war. Such appointments required to be confirmed later by the Secretary of State for War. The Commander-in-Chief was thus in a position always to select, for certain difficult and important commands and duties, the individual who appeared to him to be the most fitted for the task. For instance, General Broadwood, who was a young major in the 12th Lancers, was made a local brigadier-general by Lord Roberts at the commencement of the operations, and was entrusted with the command of the second cavalry brigade under French. His former regiment belonged to that brigade, so that Major Broadwood's regimental commanding officer thus became his junior's subordinate.

in the handling of large bodies of troops, and the experience he had gained during his campaign against the Mahdi could not be turned to account under the completely different conditions of the Boer war. The manœuvres on a large scale, which now take place in England, are chiefly due to the sanguinary teachings of South Africa.* Even born soldiers with a great natural gift for command, among whom the former Chief of the Staff in South Africa must undoubtedly be numbered, require this practice in handling large bodies of troops, in order to properly appreciate the difficulties and friction connected therewith.

That the attacks of the individual brigades and battalions were so fruitless in spite of all their bravery is to be ascribed above all to their wrong and fatal endeavours to rush the enemy's position as quickly as possible without first overwhelming him with fire. There was no instance of carefully prepared fire tactics, of the firing line being continually strengthened by troops from the rear; there was no instance of a strong and determined effort being made to acquire the ascendancy over the enemy's fire. This mode of procedure shows that the importance of fire, and the difficulties, which modern arms place in the way of the attacker, were by no means clearly grasped by the British, notwithstanding that their regulations bore an external resemblance to those of the great continental armies.

Consequently the mode of attack could be neither suitable nor successful in spite of all endeavours.

* After his brilliant victory at Omdurman, Lord Kitchener informed a foreign Military Attaché that the training of British generals would be defective so long as it was not decided in England to have manœuvres on a large scale. He admired the great German manœuvres, for they afforded the sole means by which a general could have practice in handling large masses. As soon as he was appointed Commander-in-Chief in India after the war, and had a free hand, one of his first measures was to arrange for manœuvres for the army in India on a scale never before attempted either in England or in one of her colonies.

The British tactics in South Africa were subjected to continual change, and the infantry always attacked in different formations during the various phases of the war. In searching for the form it overlooked the essence, and the real cause of the failures, which consisted solely in not realising the importance of establishing superiority in fire. During the first part of the campaign the infantry tactics were totally different to what they were under Lord Roberts; at the outset the result of the training in peace was a tendency towards narrow fronts, the firing line was extended late, and with short intervals between the men; the depth of the formations was great, the troops being disposed in several lines one behind the other, although proper use was not made of the reserves, and close order was much favoured. At Paardeberg, on the other hand, the breadth of front was excessive, the firing lines were strong, but not dense, and they were extended early; at times all the troops were pushed into the firing line almost simultaneously, there was no formation in depth, and skirmishing order was alone employed when once within extreme range of the enemy.

It is all the more difficult to appraise correctly the value of these tactics for European conditions, because an essential factor, in the shape of the co-operation of a powerful artillery, was almost wholly wanting, especially on the Boer side, in most of the engagements of the South African war. At Paardeberg, especially, the weak Boer artillery was silenced immediately after the commencement of the battle, and had no effect whatever upon it, the British infantry not having been exposed at all to any artillery fire worth mentioning. The co-operation of the English guns also did not have much effect, owing to lack of reconnaissance, and the ignorance concerning the actual position of the enemy's entrenchments. For practical purposes the infantry received no support from them, and it was a

particularly grave error that the battery on Signal Hill, which had, at first, by its very effective enfilade fire against the Boers at the river bend, rendered such powerful aid to the advance of the nineteenth brigade, should have at once ceased firing as soon as some of its shells fell by mistake among the ranks of the Highlanders.

Of the formations adopted by the infantry, the firing line which was widely extended at long range showed itself to be suitable for the advance across the bare plain. Most of the battalions managed to get within about 800 yards or so of the enemy in this formation, without any loss worth speaking of, although the very clear atmosphere on the 18th allowed objects to be seen distinctly a long way off, and although the Boers opened a very hot fire when they were about a mile away.* It was the attempt on the part of the attackers to cross the middle zone of infantry fire, without themselves bringing a sufficiently powerful fire to bear, which first brought them to a standstill. As soon as the losses accumulated in the thin firing line, the latter had no longer sufficient inherent strength to continue its advance, and as there was no depth of formation, it received no fresh support from the rear, so that the attack was bound to collapse. A widely extended firing line, while favouring the approach, proved of itself to be unsuitable for carrying through the musketry fight. It must be given at an early stage, such strength and density, by pushing in thin lines, that it will be

* It is a common but altogether erroneous opinion that the Boers always allowed the English to approach within quite short range, in order to crush them then in the shortest possible time, by means of a well-aimed and overpowering fire at the most effective distance. It is true that, in various small combats, some Boer Commandos did venture to act thus, in their contempt for the bad shooting of the British infantry, and relying on the speed of their horses. But this was by no means the rule; on the contrary, it was just at the longer ranges that the Boers understood very well how to utilise the superiority of modern firearms. Under European conditions the less mobile defender will also prefer to act thus, so as not to allow attackers, who shoot well, to approach quite unmolested within short range.

equal to the demands of a severe fire action from the outset, and will not begin the battle with insufficient forces, or have to fight against superior numbers. The thin firing line will, it is true, require a greater extension of front on the part of the smaller units when first extended. But this will find its natural limit owing to the absolute necessity of having a strong formation in depth, which is of increased importance owing to the wasteful character of the modern battle. This imperative demand will, of itself, forbid the breadth of front hitherto laid down for the larger tactical units from being much exceeded.

The fighting at Paardeberg strikingly exemplifies the whole significance of the principle underlying the German infantry regulations, namely, that the preliminaries to success in the modern infantry attack are great depth of formation, and a limited extent of front at first. In this way only will it be possible to increase the power of the firing line by uninterruptedly feeding it with fresh rifles from the rear to such an extent that it will ultimately acquire the mastery.* The limits, and distances within which the attack should be commenced, and carried out nowadays, have, of course, continually increased owing to the improvements in fire-arms, and the struggle to get the upper hand in the musketry fight must take place at longer range than formerly. The superior fire of the defence will be felt especially at long ranges, and the invisibility of an adversary, who uses smokeless powder, will entail high demands on the moral courage of the attackers. These must, therefore, endeavour to approach

* The Boers failed to recapture Kitchener's Kopje on the 23rd, notwithstanding their good shooting and sharp eyesight, chiefly because they had no depth of formation; the long thin firing line without reserves is quite unsuited for carrying out a serious attack. Nor did the Boers ever succeed during the war in carrying through victoriously such an attack against a well-entrenched adversary, owing to their complete lack of tactical training, unless they effected a surprise or were greatly aided by the ground.

as rapidly as possible to within such a distance* of the enemy from which they can see either him or only his position, and bring an effective fire to bear.

The modern attack will consist chiefly in securing positions from which to bring fire to bear on the enemy, and every premature advance from them may lead to the extermination of the attackers, if the fire of the defenders has not been previously weakened. A struggle of this description, with all its disappointments and rebuffs, may continue for hours, and even days, and the attacker will have to try and adapt to his own use the strong points of the defence, and, under certain circumstances, he must even have recourse to the spade. The chances in favour of the attack and defence will thus become, gradually, more evenly balanced, and, as the battle proceeds, the moral superiority of the advancing attacker will be augmented in proportion as the defender begins to get exhausted.†

When once the fire of the defenders has commenced to weaken, the further progress of the attack will vary according to the state of the action, the ground, the strength of the hostile fire, and the demeanour of the enemy. The behaviour of the English

* This distance will vary according to the topographical conditions and the light. Owing to the very much more unfavourable atmospheric conditions in Europe, the ranges at which both the defenders and the attackers will be able to open fire will be considerably shorter in any event than was the case in South Africa.

† A German officer, who was present during the action with the Boers in the eastern part of the river valley, declared that the dash with which the British advanced in that portion of the field to within about 500 yards created a profound moral impression on the Boers, who were solidly fixed in their positions. If, at that range, the British had only fired with some degree of effect, they would undoubtedly have succeeded in penetrating into the Boer position at that point, as the resistance of the Boers, who were opposite to them, would not have been a lengthy one. The attackers, instead of charging at once, should have poured in an effective fire, and then have charged with the whole of their cavalry. The British companies, however, after a short pause, again dashed forward, almost without firing, until within about two or three hundred yards, when they threw themselves down, and kept up a very weak and quite ineffective fire until the evening.

at Paardeberg affords several instructive instances concerning the mode of advance of the firing line. They used every possible means to advance by running, by rushes, by crawling, and even by working their way forwards by the use of the spade. The rushes were generally made by small portions of the firing line alternately, mutually supported by the fire of the other portions, and they varied from 30 to 90 yards in extent, according to the strength of the Boer fire. In the opinion of many English officers it was difficult to get the skirmishers to stand up and rush forward when under the enemy's fire, but, once they had been induced to rise, the advance was continued as far as possible without reference to the heavier losses which were caused by the rushes being longer. But in no case must the preparations for a rush allow the enemy to discern what troops are going to make it.

Crawling forward was a method which had good results in this war for the first time in practice; it was relatively rapid, and the losses which it entailed were but small.* The mode of attack sometimes adopted successfully by the Boers was as follows: A man would crawl forward, scarcely raising his body, half or his whole length, while his neighbour fired; they then changed their parts, and this was continued uninterruptedly. The firing line was thus shooting continuously, while it advanced slowly, but without halting, in a stealthy kind of manner. This appears to have had a disquieting and paralysing effect on the defenders, who were bound to their own position; the nearer the creeping, snakelike line approached them, and the less they were able to inflict perceptible loss on the small, prone targets, the stronger

* At medium and decisive ranges all reinforcements for the firing line crawled over the last 80 or 100 yards, but, otherwise, they generally advanced by rushes.

did this feeling become, especially as the defenders themselves were under effective fire the whole time. A German officer, who accompanied the attack of the Boers at Nitral's Nek, where they employed these tactics, has described their effect upon the British in the following very instructive terms: "When, firing and crawling the whole time, we had thus crept to within about 300 yards of the enemy, we saw him waving a number of white handkerchiefs as a token of surrender; but as, in consequence of many an evil experience, we had no longer any faith in these signs of submission, we continued to crawl forward. It was not until we saw that most of the British soldiers were throwing away their arms, that we stood up in order to take them prisoners. When we got up to them, I observed that many men were utterly unnerved. I expressed my astonishment later to the English officers at the moral condition of their troops, and they replied that our stealthy mode of advance was to blame for it. The feeling on seeing the danger approaching nearer and nearer, without being able to ward it off, was uncommonly depressing, and alarming for the troops; for the Boers, who were creeping forward under cover of the boulders, afforded so unfavourable a target, that the fire of the British had but little effect, whereas they were constantly being shot at by the enemy. All this contributed to destroy the nerves of the troops."

This and many other instances show that greater attention should be paid than formerly to crawling forward when advancing at short ranges across ground devoid of cover. The firing line must represent a kind of continually advancing roll of fire, which is in constant movement, without the individual soldier affording a favourable target to the enemy. When advancing across a perfectly flat country it may even happen occasionally that, in some places, victory will be sought for not in the charge, but

in this method of creeping forward under cover of an unceasing fire. The approach by means of the spade was carried out relatively quickly, especially in the case of the nineteenth brigade, and, at first, work was carried on throughout the whole day; the infantry, which was thus employed lying down, suffered hardly any loss; a portion of the men were digging, while a thin firing line, close in front, protected them. The Royal Canadians adopted this method during their attack in the early morning of February 27th.

Both on that occasion, as also during the action on the 18th, and in later engagements as well, this very remarkable phenomenon was observed, that the losses at the close ranges of two, three, and four hundred yards were very much less than at the longer distances. The British officers considered the explanation of this to be that, at short ranges, the Boers thought it too dangerous to raise their heads above cover in order to take aim, as soon as the adversary was in position and had begun to fire; they used to duck their heads, and pull the trigger without aiming, and they only ventured to raise their heads again above cover when the English stood up for a fresh advance.*

It seems strange, at first sight, that, after the British had succeeded in approaching so close to the Boer position in all parts of the battle-field on the evening of the 18th, they should have retired during the night, and have abandoned all the advantages so hardly won, instead of making use of the darkness to entrench themselves in order to attack again early on the 19th. The explanation is certainly to be found partly in the total moral, and physical exhaustion of the troops, but, above all, in the shaken confidence of officers and men in their own ability; they did not believe that they could carry through an

* This fact has also been confirmed by a combatant on the Boer side.

attack against defenders armed with a small calibre rifle. On the following day, when he was labouring under the depressing influence of the bloody, and yet, in spite of all the sacrifices which had been made, fruitless attacks, even Lord Kitchener said to Captain Slocum, the American Military Attaché: "If I had known yesterday morning what I know to-day, I would not have attacked the Boers in the river valley; it is impossible against the modern rifle." When Lord Roberts arrived on the morning of the 19th, he also forbade any further attack.

With the fruitless, yet by no means especially costly attacks at Paardeberg, there began to spread a nervousness of suffering loss,* and of making an attack which bore bad fruit far beyond the limits of South Africa, while one substantial reason for the long duration of the war was, undoubtedly, the timorous avoidance of striking any crushing blow at the Boers. The action of the Commander-in-Chief in prohibiting any further attacks at Paardeberg was also in no way justified by the military situation; this, on the contrary, called for a speedy settlement of the crisis, in view of the threatened assembly of Boer forces in rear of the British, and the increasing difficulties in the way of supply.

The prospects of Cronje being able to break through, desperate as his position seemed, were very favourable in the night of February 18th-19th, on the 19th itself, and even during the succeeding days so long as Kitchener's Kopje was in possession of de Wet. But the latter should certainly have helped General Cronje in his resolve to escape by a greater display of activity. It was especially a grave error that, when he had captured Kitchener's Kopje, which was so important

* During the later course of the war orders to attack, issued by Lord Roberts, are said to have often contained the words: "If this be possible without heavy loss."

a point tactically, at such slight cost, on the afternoon of the 18th, he should have remained there more or less inactive, instead of at once attacking the rear of the sixth division, which was fully occupied in fighting the Boers in the valley of the river. That period of the afternoon was, without doubt, the most critical of all during the whole day for the British; it would have been easy to penetrate through their thin fighting line, and for Cronje to escape. But both de Wet and the Commandos, which were assembling to the east and south-east, should have been more enterprising during the days which followed; expeditions against the long Line of Communications, which was almost unprotected, could have cut off the supplies of the British troops held fast by Cronje, and could have rendered their situation extremely precarious.

While the Boer laager was being bombarded the preponderance of the English artillery was so overwhelming,* that it is simply impossible to appraise correctly the power of the various British guns. The lyddite shells of the howitzer batteries, and of the naval guns, of which so much had been expected in England, proved themselves to be of little use for field service, although it must not be forgotten that the dry and sandy soil of the Modder River banks was little favourable to any kind of percussion shells. Their effect on the well entrenched Boers was very small; when they burst they usually made a most diabolical noise, but the fragments were very few in number, and the shells made holes in the sandy ground about two feet wide and one foot deep. Originally they had been intended only for naval warfare, where they may certainly produce a powerful effect by means of their unwholesome gases and the concussion of the

* The British had 91 guns at the last, but the Boers only had 6, of which 4 could not be fired after the 20th, as their ammunition had been destroyed.

air, when they burst in an enclosed space. In a battle on land, however, the gases evaporate rapidly in the atmosphere, and the Boers soon accustomed themselves to their deafening noise. One who fought on their side has described their effect from his own experience in the following terms: "The lyddite shells had, as a rule, no effect whatever on men lying down; I have been present myself when Boers had their clothes scorched by bursting lyddite projectiles, but only had their skin scratched. . . . The Boers had very little respect for the British artillery fire, especially for its lyddite fire. The moral effect, which had been, perhaps, expected from the din of these shells was nil. Coffee was often prepared outside the shelters while lyddite firing was going on. After all moral effect is really the child of material success; a weapon which hits something will acquire the former, whether it makes much or little noise. One gets accustomed very quickly to the most frightful things, on seeing that they do no harm."

Major Albrecht, the Commandant of the Free State Artillery, who was captured, expressed himself in similar terms to English officers. He said that the moral effect of the lyddite shells was great, at first, but that it was soon discovered that it was only necessary to throw one's self down in order to remain unhurt, even in the case of explosions close at hand, and the fear, which these shells inspired, quickly disappeared in consequence. If, on the other hand, a shell did happen to burst in an entrenchment, then the effect was certainly devastating.

The Vickers-Nordenfelt machine guns, or "pom-poms," as the English termed them on account of their continuous noise in action, exercised, however, for this reason an extraordinarily demoralising effect on the nerves, especially of the British infantry. The three Vickers-Maxim guns, which it was so ardently awaiting, did not

reach Paardeberg until February 26th, so that they were scarcely made use of.

The galling supersession of General Kelly-Kenny by Lord Kitchener, his junior, had a sequel after the surrender of Cronje. The former had obeyed the orders of Lord Roberts without demur, but, in his Despatch, he alluded to the matter by stating that, with reference to his position and that of Lord Kitchener, he "fully understood what was meant. This is not the time to mention personal matters, and until the present operations are concluded I prefer to subject myself to any humiliation rather than raise the question of the command. . . ."

His demeanour towards Lord Kitchener was so perfect throughout, that the latter did not even suspect that General Kelly-Kenny was dissatisfied. It is said that the external relations between the two were excellent during the period in question. After Cronje surrendered there was a personal explanation between Lord Roberts and General Kelly-Kenny, which afforded complete satisfaction to the latter.

General von Goeben acted in a similar manner when he had a personal quarrel with General von Steinmetz on August 18th, 1870. He wrote to his wife on the 27th: "Our differences of long standing culminated at last in a violent personal quarrel during the battle of the 18th, when I, having lost my temper, repudiated his pretensions altogether, and turned my back on him." Although Goeben had been the injured one, he did not report the affair to the King, because "complaints under such circumstances in the field should be avoided as far as possible." He preferred shortly afterwards to "effect a reconciliation (with Steinmetz) during the course of a lengthy personal explanation."

Military history affords many instances of similar friction arising just at times of extreme tension, and of the success

of the operations being only too frequently jeopardised by such personal dissensions or claims. General Kelly-Kenny fulfilled a simple soldierly duty by putting all personal considerations on one side for the good of the service, at a moment when the situation itself was causing quite enough friction and difficulties. The true greatness of a strong soldierly character is shown in such modest demeanour and renunciation of self, so necessary in the settlement of such quarrels, at times when the situation causes of itself great mental and moral strain.

APPENDICES.

PART I.

COLENSO AND MAGERSFONTEIN.

APPENDIX I.

ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE FIRST ARMY CORPS.

GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING: GENERAL SIR REDVERS BULLER.

CHIEF OF THE STAFF: MAJOR-GENERAL SIR A. HUNTER.

FIRST DIVISION.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL LORD METHUEN.

Second Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL HILDYARD.

- 2nd East Surrey.
- 2nd West Yorkshire.
- 2nd Devonshire.
- 2nd West Surrey.

First Brigade (Guards).

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. COLVILE.

- 1st Scots Guards.
- 2nd Coldstreams.
- 1st Coldstreams.
- 3rd Grenadiers.

- No. 26 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital Depôt Cos.
- Bearer Co. No. 2.

- No. 19 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 18.
- Bearer Co. No. 18.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

- "A" Squadron 14th Hussars.
- 7th Field Battery.
- 14th Field Battery.
- 66th Field Battery.
- Ammunition column.
- No. 20 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 19.
- 17th Co. R.E.

SECOND DIVISION.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR F. CLERY.

Fourth Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL HON. N. LYTTELTON.

- 1st Rifle Brigade.
- 1st Durham Light Infantry.
- 3rd King's Royal Rifles.
- 2nd Scottish Rifles.
- No. 16 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 14.
- Bearer Co. No. 14.

Third Brigade (*Highlanders.*)

MAJOR-GENERAL WAUCHOPE.

- 1st Argyll and Sutherland.
- 2nd Seaforths.
- 1st Highland Light Infantry.
- 2nd Black Watch.
- No. 14 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 8.
- Bearer Co. No. 1.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

- "B" Squadron 14th Hussars.
- 63rd Field Battery.
- 64th Field Battery.
- 73rd Field Battery.
- Ammunition column.
- No. 24 Co. A.S C.
- Field Hospital No. 3.
- 11th Co. R.E.

THIRD DIVISION.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR W. GATACRE.

Sixth Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL BARTON.

- 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers.
- 1st Royal Welch Fusiliers.
- 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers.
- 2nd Royal Fusiliers.
- No. 36 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 11.
- Bearer Co. No. 17.

Fifth Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL HART.

- 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
- 1st Connaught Rangers.
- 2nd Royal Irish Rifles.
- 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.
- No. 30 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 10.
- Bearer Co. No. 16.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

- "C" Squadron 14th Hussars.
- 74th Field Battery.
- 77th Field Battery.
- 79th Field Battery.
- Ammunition column.
- No. 33 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 7.
- 12th Co. R.E.

CORPS TROOPS.

Infantry.



1st Royal Scots.

Cavalry.



13th Hussars.

Corps Artillery.



65th Field Battery (Howitzer). 61st Field Battery (Howitzer). 37th Field Battery (Howitzer).

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BARKER.



78th Field Battery. 38th Field Battery. 4th Field Battery.

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL NEWBIGGING.



"P" Battery R.H.A. "G" Battery R.H.A.

COLONEL DAVIDSON.

Royal Engineers.



No. 10 Railway Co.

2 Balloon Sections.

No. 1 Field Park.

26th Co.

1st Telegraph Division.

"A" Pontoon Troop.

Supply Columns and Train.



Field Bakery No. 40 Co. A.S.C.

Supply Park. (3 Cos. A.S.C.)

Ammunition Park.

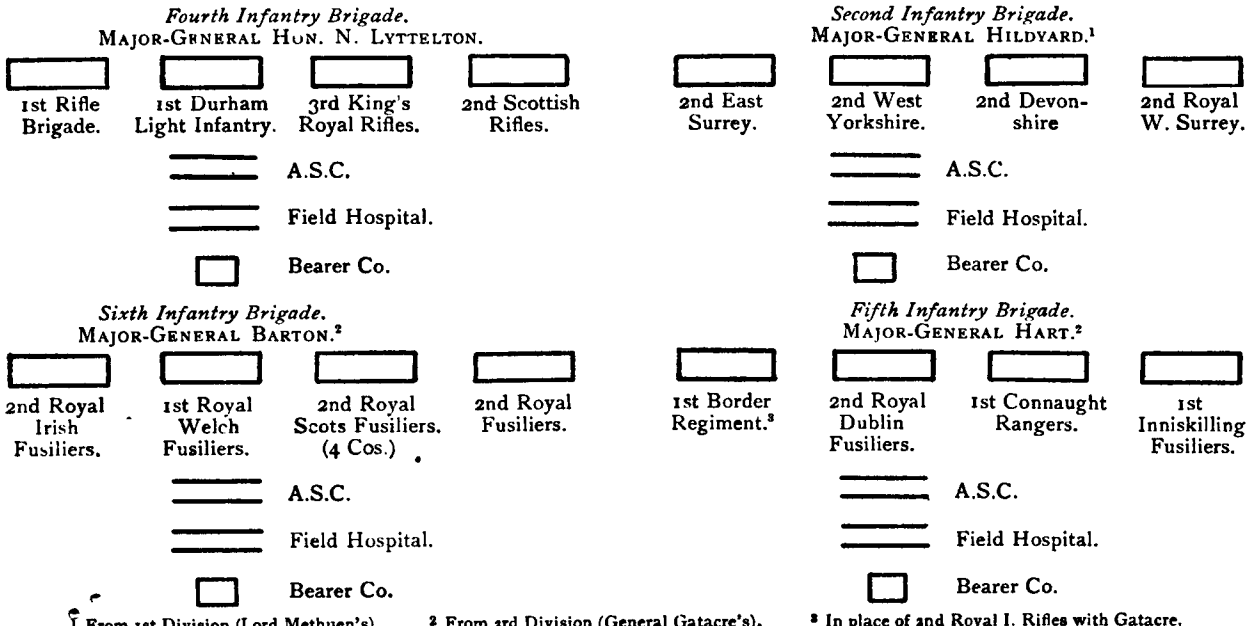
Field Hospital No. 5.

No. 21 Co. A.S.C. Supply Column.

ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE NATAL FIELD FORCE on December 15th, 1899.

GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING: LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR F. CLERY.

ASSISTANT ADJUTANT-GENERAL: COLONEL HAMILTON.



[1] From 1st Division (Lord Methuen's). [2] From 3rd Division (General Gatacre's). [3] In place of 2nd Royal I. Rifles with Gatacre.

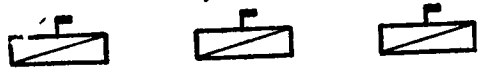
MOUNTED TROOPS.

COLONEL THE EARL OF DUNDONALD.

13th Hussars.[1]



1st Royal Dragoons.[2]

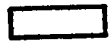


Mounted Infantry.

King's Royal Rifles.

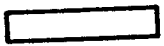


Dublin Fusiliers.

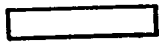


Colonial Troops.

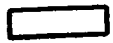
South African Light Horse.



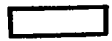
Bethune's Mounted Infantry.



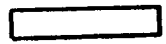
Imperial Light Horse.



Natal Carabineers.



Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry.



ARTILLERY.

1st Brigade Division R.F.A.[3]

66th Battery. 14th Battery. 7th Battery.



2nd Brigade Division R.F.A.

73rd Battery. 64th Battery.



Naval Guns.

Two 4·7 in. Twelve 12-prs.



ROYAL ENGINEERS.

17th Co. and Pontoon Troop.



[1] Corps Cavalry.

[2] From 2nd Brigade Cavalry Division.

[3] From 1st Division.

ORDER OF BATTLE OF LORD METHUEN'S DIVISION, December 11th, 1899.

Third (Highland) Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL WAUCHOPE.

- 1st Argyll and Sutherland.
- 2nd Seaforths.
- 1st Highland Light Infantry.
- 2nd Black Watch.
- No. 14 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 8.
- Bearer Co. No. 1.

First (Guards) Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. COLVILE.

- 1st Scots Guards.
- 2nd Coldstreams.
- 1st Coldstreams.
- 3rd Grenadiers.
- No. 19 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 18.
- Bearer Co. No. 18.

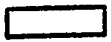
Ninth Infantry Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL POLE-CAREW.

- 2nd Northamptonshire.
- 1st Northumberland Fusiliers.
- Half 1st Loyal North Lancashire.[1]
- 2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry.
- No. 20 Co. A.S.C.
- Field Hospital No. 19.
- Volunteer Bearer Co.

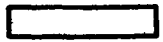
[1] The other half was shut up in Kimberley.

TROOPS NOT IN BRIGADE.



Naval Brigade.

COLONEL DOWNMAN.

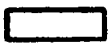


1st Gordon Highlanders.

MOUNTED TROOPS.

Cavalry Brigade.

MAJOR-GENERAL BABINGTON.



Rimington's Guides.



Mounted Infantry.



12th Lancers.



9th Lancers.

ARTILLERY.

Naval Guns.



One 4·7 inch. 12 pr. Battery.

Field Batteries.



65th. (Howitzer.) 75th. 62nd. 18th.

Horse Artillery.



"G" Battery.

Ammunition Columns.



Balloon Detachment.



Royal Engineers.



26th Co. 11th Co.

APPENDIX IV.—BRITISH STRENGTH AND LOSSES AT MAGERSFONTEIN.

	Probable Strength.		Length of Time in Action: Hours.	Killed.		Wounded.		Missing.		Total.		Remarks.
	Officers.	Men.		Officers.	Men.	Officers.	Men.	Officers.	Men.	Officers.	Men.	
Brigade of Guards—												
Staff	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
3rd Grenadiers	18	669	8	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	4	
1st Coldstreams	28	753		—	8	5	44	—	—	5	52	
2nd Coldstreams	23	728		1	1	—	22	—	—	1	23	
1st Scots Guards	25	699	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
Highland Brigade—												
Staff	—	—	—	1	—	3	—	—	—	4	—	
2nd Seaforths	29	800	12	5	36	7	162	—	23	12	221	
1st Highland Light Infantry ...	29	800		2	10	7	68	—	2	9	80	
1st Argyll and Sutherland ..	27	698		2	19	4	61	—	7	6	87	
2nd Black Watch	29	800		6	59	10	207	—	74	16	340	
1st Gordon Highlanders	29	800	5	3	3	2	35	—	1	5	39	Only 6 Co.'s, about 600 men, in action.
Ninth Brigade—												
1st Northumberland Fusiliers ...	19	705	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
2nd Northamptonshire	28	776	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry ...	22	696	8	1	8	—	—	—	—	1	8	Only 5 Co.'s, about 400 men, in action.
Half 1st Loyal North Lancashire	14	358	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	
Cavalry Brigade—												
Staff	—		—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	
9th Lancers	400		12	—	1	—	7	—	—	—	8	
12th Lancers	400		12	—	3	—	17	—	—	—	20	
Mounted Infantry and Rimington's Guides	900		—	2	—	2	4	—	—	4	4	
Artillery—												
R.H.A. "G" Battery	—	—	10—11	—	—	2	4	—	—	2	4	
18th Battery R.F.A.	—	—	11	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
62nd ,, ...	—	—	11	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	
75th ,, ...	—	—	11	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	
Howitzer Battery	—	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
R.A.M. Corps	—	—	—	—	—	1	5	—	1	1	6	
Total	—	—	—	23	149	45	646	—	108	68	903	

PART II.

RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY AND PAARDEBERG.

APPENDIX I.

DISTRIBUTION AND STRENGTH OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN SOUTH AFRICA ON JANUARY 31, 1900.

A.—IN NATAL.

Regiments or Corps.	Strength.	Total.
1. AT LADYSMITH.		
Cavalry: 4 Regiments	1,200	1,200
Artillery: 6 Batteries R.F.A.	36 guns	36 guns 1,080
Infantry: 11 Battalions	7,500	7,500
2. BETWEEN THE TUGELA AND DURBAN.		
Cavalry: 2⅔ Regiments	1,100	1,100
Artillery:		
1 Battery R.H.A.	6 guns	62 guns 1,800
7⅓ Batteries R.F.A.	44 ,,	
1 Mountain Battery	6 ,,	
1 Howitzer Battery	6 ,,	
Infantry: 5½ Brigades	16,500	17,300
Other Infantry	800	
Colonial Troops:		
Field Artillery	22 guns	22 guns 550
Mounted Troops	1,500	2,300
Dismounted Troops	800	
Volunteers	2,000	2,000
Total	...	34,830 men 120 guns
Engineer Troops	...	1,100
Transport and Depôt Troops	...	1,472
Grand Total	...	37,402 men 120 guns

N.B.—The number of sick is not known.

B.—IN CAPE COLONY.

Regiments or Corps.	Strength.	Total.
Cavalry: 8¼ Regiments	4,196	4,196
Artillery:		
8 Batteries R.H.A.	48 guns	
12 Batteries R.F.A.	72 „	
2 Howitzer Batteries	12 „	150 guns
2 Co.'s R.G.A. with 8 6-inch Howitzers and 4 4·7-inch Guns	12 „	4,500
1 Co. R.G.A. with 6 5-inch Siege Guns	6 „	
Mounted Infantry	3,050	3,050
Infantry:		
1st Brigade	3 754	
3rd „	3,121	
9th „	2,754	
13th „	2,885	33,809
14th „	3,322	
18th „	3,601	
Other Infantry, inclusive of 925 men of the Canadian Contingent	14,372	
Colonial Troops:		
Mounted Troops from Cape Colony	2,000	
From other Colonies	1,385	3,385
Volunteers from Cape Colony	2,960	2,960
Engineer Troops	2,000	2,000
Transport and Depôt Troops	4,278	4,278
Sick (not included above)	2,000	2,000
Total	...	60,296 men 150 guns

Grand Total of the British *Field* Army in South Africa } 97,698 men and 270 guns.

APPENDIX II.

I.

CAPE TOWN,

January 26th, 1900.

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN WARFARE.

INFANTRY—

As it is desirable that full advantage should be taken of the experience gained during the past three months by our troops in South Africa, the following notes are issued for the guidance of all who may find themselves in command of a force (large or small) on service in the field.

We have to deal with an enemy possessing remarkable mobility, intimately acquainted with the country, thoroughly understanding how to take advantage of ground, adept in improvising cover, and most skilful in the use of their weapons.

Against such an enemy any attempt to take a position by direct attack will assuredly fail. The only hope of success lies in being able to turn one or both flanks, or, what would in many instances be equally effective, to threaten to cut the enemy's line of communication. Before any plan of attack can be decided upon the position must be carefully examined by reconnoitring parties, and every endeavour must be made to obtain all possible information about it from the people of the country. It must, however, be remembered that the position ostensibly occupied is not always the one the Boers intend to defend; it is often merely a decoy, a stronger position in the vicinity having previously been prepared upon which they move rapidly, and from which they can frequently bring a destructive fire to bear upon the attacking line. Their marvellous mobility enables them to do this without much risk to themselves, and also to be in strength at any point of the position that may be seriously threatened. It follows, therefore, that our object should be to cripple the mobility of the Boers, and to effect this, next to inflicting heavy losses on the men themselves, the surest means would be the capture or destruction of their horses.

When the extreme rifle range from the position is reached (1,500 to 1,800 yards) by the advance troops, or before if they find themselves under artillery fire, all column formations must be given up, and when advancing to the attack of the position infantry must be freely extended, even, on occasions, if necessary, to six or eight paces, the front and both flanks being well co[illegible]

with scouts. This extended formation will throw increased responsibility on battalion and company commanders. The objective aimed at, therefore, should be carefully explained to them. They should be allowed to make use of any opportunity that may offer to further the scheme, on the distinct understanding that no isolated acts are attempted, such as might endanger the general plan. During the attack commanding officers must be careful not to lose touch with the troops on their right and left, and they should, as far as possible, ensure their co-operation. Every advantage should be taken of cover, and battalion and company commanders should look out for and occupy positions from which they would be able to bring an enfilading fire to bear upon the enemy. The capacity of these officers will be judged by the initiative displayed in seizing rapidly every opportunity to further the general scheme of attack.

An essential point, and one which must never be lost sight of, is the power of endurance of the infantry soldier. If infantry soldiers, carrying as they do a considerable weight on their backs, are called upon to march a longer distance than can reasonably be expected from men in a normal state of health, or if they are injudiciously pressed as regards the pace, they will necessarily commence to feel the strain before they reach a point where their best energies are required to surmount the difficulties which lie before them. If at such a period a man feels exhausted, moral deterioration, and the consequences to our arms which such deterioration entails, must readily supervene.

ARTILLERY—

As a general rule the Artillery appear to have adapted themselves to the situation, and to the special conditions which present themselves in a campaign in South Africa.

The following points, however, require to be noticed :—

1. At the commencement of an action artillery should not be ordered to take up a position until it has been ascertained by scouts to be clear of the enemy, and out of range of infantry fire.

2. When it is intended to take a position with infantry the preparation by artillery should be thorough and not spasmodic. Unless a strong force of infantry is pushed within 900 yards of the position, the enemy will not occupy his trenches, and the guns will have no target. It is a mere waste of ammunition also to bombard an entrenchment when the infantry attack is likely to be delayed, even for a short time. To be of real value the fire of the guns should be continuous until the assault is about to be delivered.

3. The expenditure of ammunition is a matter which can only be regulated by the circumstances of the movement ;

officers commanding should, however, always bear in mind that the supply of artillery ammunition in the field is necessarily limited.

4. It is of great importance that artillery horses should be kept fit for any special effort. They are not easily replaced, and it is the duty of artillery officers to represent to the commander of the column whenever they consider that their horses are being unduly worked, as regards either pace or distance.

CAVALRY AND MOUNTED TROOPS.

Similarly with cavalry horses. Every endeavour should be made to save them as much as possible, for unless this is done they cannot be expected to last through a lengthened campaign.

The men should dismount on every available opportunity, if for a few minutes only at a time, and, on the line of march, it will be advantageous for them to occasionally lead instead of riding their horses.

Horses should be fed at short intervals, and not allowed to be kept too long without water. A sufficiency of grain is necessary to enable horses to withstand hard work, but they will never keep in condition unless they have an ample supply of hay or some bulky equivalent.

On the line of march scouting must be carried out by the mounted troops in the most searching manner, in front and on both flanks. All high ground should be visited, and, whenever practicable, horsemen should ride along ridges and hills. As soon as parties of the enemy are observed, the mounted troops (after sending back word to the commander) should make a considerable detour round the position occupied by the Boers, endeavour to estimate their numbers, and to ascertain where their horses have been left. They should also see whether, by threatening the Boers' line of communication, they would not be forced to fight on ground unprepared for defence.

(Signed) ROBERTS, *Field-Marshal*,
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

II.

CAPE TOWN,
February 5th, 1900.

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN WARFARE.

CAVALRY—

1. On reconnaissances or patrols not likely to be prolonged beyond one day, the cavalry soldier's equipment should be lightened as much as possible, nothing being taken that can possibly be dispensed with.

2. It has been brought to my notice that our cavalry move too slowly when on reconnaissance duty, and that unnecessary long halts are made, the result being that the enemy, although starting after the cavalry, are able to get ahead of it. I could understand this if the country were close and difficult, but between the Modder and the Orange rivers its general features are such as to admit of small parties of cavalry accompanied by field guns being employed with impunity.

ARTILLERY—

3. If the enemy's guns have, in some instances, the advantage of ours in range, we have the advantage of theirs in mobility, and we should make use of this by not remaining in positions, the precise distance of which from the enemy's batteries has evidently been fixed beforehand. Moreover, it has been proved that the Boer's fire is far less accurate at unknown distances. In taking up positions compact battery formations should be avoided. The guns should be opened out, or it may be desirable to advance by sections or batteries. Similarly, retirements should be carried out at considerably increased intervals, by alternate batteries or sections if necessary, and care should be taken to travel quickly through the danger zone of hostile artillery fire.

The following plan, frequently adopted by the Boers, has succeeded in deceiving our artillery on several occasions: Suppose "A" to be a gun emplacement, the gun firing smokeless powder; simultaneously with the discharge of the gun at "A," a powder flask of black powder will be exploded at "B," a hill in rear, leading us to direct our projectile on "B." Careful calculation with a watch, however, will defeat this plan.

INFANTRY—

4. The present open formation renders it difficult for officers to exercise command over their men, except such as may be in their immediate vicinity. A remedy for this would appear to be a system of whistle calls, by which a company lying in extended order could obey orders as readily as if in quarter column. I invite suggestions for such a system of whistle calls as would be useful.

5. It is difficult to recognise officers as equipped at present, and it seems desirable they should wear a distinguishing mark of some kind, either on the collar at the back of the neck, or on the back of the coat.

6. Soldiers, when under fire, do not take sufficient advantage of the sandy nature of the soil to construct cover for themselves. If such soil is scraped even with a canteen lid, a certain amount of cover from rifle fire can be obtained in a short time.

7. The distribution of ammunition to the firing line is one of the most difficult problems of modern warfare. One solution which has been suggested to me, is for a portion of the supports gradually to creep forward until a regular chain of men is established from the supports—where the ammunition carts should be—right up to the firing line. The ammunition could then be gradually worked up by hand till it reached the firing line, where it could be passed along as required. This would, no doubt, be a slow method of distributing ammunition, but it appears to be an improvement on the present method, which is almost impossible to carry out under fire.

8. Reports received suggest that the Boers are less likely to hold entrenchments on the plain with the same tenacity and courage as they display when defending kopjes; and it is stated that this applies especially to night time, if they know that British infantry are within easy striking distance from them. How far this is true time only can show.

(Signed) ROBERTS, *Field Marshal,*
Commanding-in-Chief, South Africa.

III.

Extracts from the Standing Orders and Instructions issued to the Sixth Infantry Division by order of Lieutenant-General Kelly-Kenny.

1. The General Officer Commanding wishes to impress on all ranks the necessity of bringing common sense to bear in the execution of Regulations and Instructions.

2. It is not by a blind adherence to the rules of war, as evolved from the lessons of the past, that success can be commanded. It is necessary to consider how far our teaching must be modified to meet the altered conditions caused by—

(*a*) Smokeless powder.

(*b*) Increased mobility on the part of an enemy, due to the mounting of his entire infantry.

3. The result of these two factors tends to greatly increase the power of the defence. It is well nigh impossible to locate with any degree of certainty the exact spot held by a cunning enemy, whose positions are no longer betrayed by smoke; moreover, his increased mobility enables him, with comparative impunity, to extend his line of defence to an extent that renders it extremely difficult for an opponent, not possessing equal mobility, to outflank him.

4. In the application of Regulations and Instructions the above points must be taken into consideration, together with the lessons that may be deduced from a study of Boer strategy and tactics during the present campaign.

5. The Boers have displayed considerable ability in the—

(*a*) Choice of defensive positions.

(*b*) Distribution of their forces and guns in such positions.

(*c*) Mobility of their units.

(*d*) Obtaining intelligence of their opponents' movements and intentions.

(*e*) Laying of ambuscades.

6. Up to the present, however, they appear to have been generally unable to—

(*a*) Follow up a success by counter-attacking after repelling an attack.

(*b*) Seriously assault a defensive position; in fact their *rôle* has been, from a strategical point of view, to adopt the offensive, and from a tactical point of view, the passive defensive.

7. To meet the altered conditions of warfare with existing organisation it is necessary—

(*a*) To sacrifice depth for increased length of front.

(*b*) To utilise mobile troops for reinforcing the troops in front when required, for turning movements, and for destroying or capturing the enemy's horses, so as to impair their mobility.

(*c*) In attacking, to select such portions of the enemy's line of defence as offer chances of obtaining natural cover within the fire zone, and where it would be possible to take up a temporary defensive position; such positions, seized before nightfall, might be reinforced after dark, and strongly entrenched.

The result of sacrificing depth for increased length of front will be to throw greater responsibility on commanding officers and company commanders, for the greater the length of front occupied by a given force the greater the difficulty of supervision by the higher commanders.

The initiative, as opportunities occur, must of necessity often be with the commander on the spot, whose capacity will be judged by his ability to seize such opportunities as arise, without attempting isolated acts such as might seriously endanger the general plan of attack or defence. He must be careful not to lose touch of the troops on his right and left, and as far as possible ensure their co-operation.

8. All ranks must be impressed with the vital necessity of meeting cunning with cunning, and while avoiding traps to lay them for the enemy.

9. Too much importance cannot be laid on the necessity of concealing the positions and movements of troops from the enemy. A few officers or men exposing themselves to view may upset the most carefully laid scheme. In advancing to the attack of a position the men should be taught to make use of every irregularity of the ground cover, however slight, that may offer itself, and to work in much more extended formations than hitherto taught.

10. The atmospheric conditions in South Africa differ so essentially from those at home, that every opportunity should be taken to practise officers and men in judging distances.

The excessive clearness of the African atmosphere, especially on the higher veldt, makes objects appear nearer than they really are. It is only by constant practice that men accustomed to judge distance at home can hope to approach to any degree of accuracy in South Africa.

APPENDIX III.

STRENGTH OF THE FORCE FOR THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY.

(A.)—Cavalry Division.

1.—CAVALRY.

1st Brigade—	Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.	Horses.
2nd Dragoons	25	458	452
6th Dragoon Guards	26	447	445
1 Squadron 6th Dragoons	4	105	120
1 „ New South Wales Lancers ...	7	87	106
1 „ 14th Hussars	4	141	137
2nd Brigade—			
Composite Regiment Household Cavalry ...	25	488	522
10th Hussars	22	437	477
12th Lancers	21	492	529
3rd Brigade—			
9th Lancers	23	440	432
16th Lancers	24	445	426
Total	181	3,540	3,646

2.—7 BATTERIES ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY.

35 Officers, 1,280 N.C.O.'s and Men, 1,401 Horses.

3.—MOUNTED INFANTRY.

1st Regiment	350	all ranks.
3rd Regiment	220	„
Roberts' Horse	380	„
New Zealand Mounted Infantry	120	„
Queensland Mounted Infantry	140	„
Rimington's Guides	205	„
Total	1,415	„

(B.)—1st Division.

Brigade of Guards—	Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.
3rd Grenadier Guards	24	939
1st Coldstream Guards	25	950
2nd Coldstream Guards	20	918
1st Scots Guards	25	957
9th Brigade—		
1st Northumberland Fusiliers	20	597
1st Loyal North Lancashire	24	423
2nd Northamptonshire	27	823
2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry	25	815
Divisional Troops	28	851
Total	218	7,273

(C.)—6th Division.

	Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.
13th Brigade—		
2nd East Kent Regiment (Buffs)	18	787
2nd Gloucestershire Regiment	23	717
1st West Riding	23	790
1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry	20	596
18th Brigade (minus the 2nd Warwickshire Regt.)—		
1st Yorkshire Regiment	21	954
1st Essex Regiment	23	937
1st Welch Regiment	23	876
Divisional Troops	38	1,008
Total	189	6,665

(D.)—7th Division.

14th Brigade—		
1st King's Own Scottish Borderers	950	all ranks.
2nd Norfolk Regiment	814	,,
2nd Lincolnshire Regiment	858	,,
2nd Hampshire Regiment	700	,,
15th Brigade—		
1st East Lancashire Regiment	910	,,
2nd Cheshire Regiment	830	,,
2nd South Wales Borderers	961	,,
2nd North Staffordshire Regiment	700	,,
Divisional Troops	920	,,
Total	7,643	,,

(E.)—9th Division.

	Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.
3rd Brigade (minus the Highland Light Infantry)—		
2nd Royal Highlanders (Black Watch) ...	19	714
2nd Seaforth Highlanders	20	832
1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders ...	22	805
19th Brigade—		
2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry ...	21	801
2nd King's Shropshire Light Infantry	24	889
1st Gordon Highlanders	24	839
2nd Royal Canadian Regiment...	40	878
Divisional Troops	26	743
Total	196	6,501

(F.)—Corps Troops.

(*a*) Mounted Infantry * (in all), at first, from	3,000—4,000	all ranks.
(*b*) Naval Brigade	476	,,
(*c*) Other Troops (Artillery, Engineers, Ammunition Park, &c)	1,070	,,
Total	5,546	,,

The average Strength from February 11th to February 27th was, in round numbers, 40,000 of all ranks, and 15,000 horses.

* Inclusive of the detachment with the Cavalry Division.

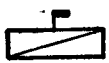
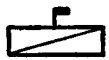
ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE TROOPS INTENDED FOR THE RELIEF OF KIMBERLEY.

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF: FIELD-MARSHAL LORD ROBERTS.

CHIEF OF THE STAFF: MAJOR-GENERAL LORD KITCHENER.

CAVALRY DIVISION (LIEUT.-GENERAL FRENCH).

FIRST CAVALRY BRIGADE (COLONEL PORTER).

1 Squadron 14th Hussars.	1 Squadron 6th Dragoons (Inniskillings).	1 Squadron New South Wales Lancers.	6th Dragoon Guards (Carabineers).	2nd Dragoons (Scots Greys).
				

ARTILLERY.

"O" Battery R.H.A.	"U" Battery R.H.A.	"T" Battery R.H.A.
		

AMMUNITION COLUMN.

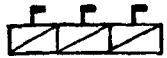


SECOND CAVALRY BRIGADE (GENERAL BROADWOOD).

Composite Regiment of Household Cavalry.



10th Hussars.



12th Lancers.



ARTILLERY.

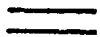
"Q" Battery R.H.A.



"R" Battery R.H.A.

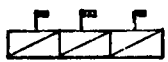


AMMUNITION COLUMN.

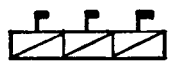


THIRD CAVALRY BRIGADE (COLONEL GORDON).

9th Lancers.



16th Lancers.



ARTILLERY.

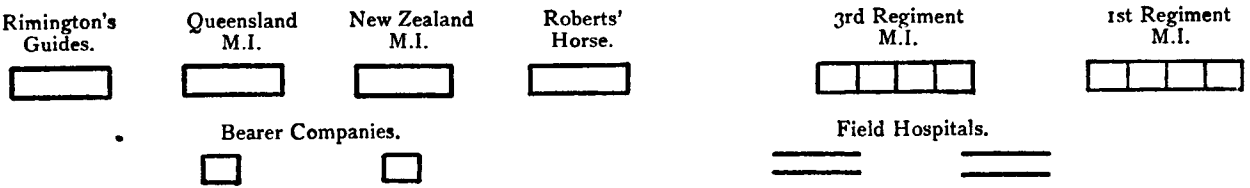
"P" Battery R.H.A.



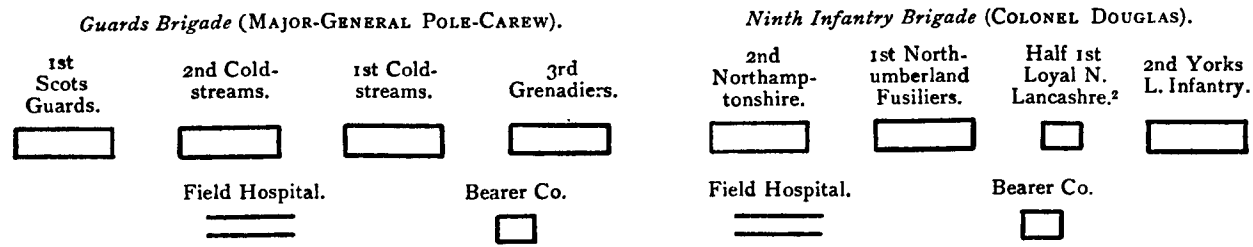
"G" Battery R.H.A.



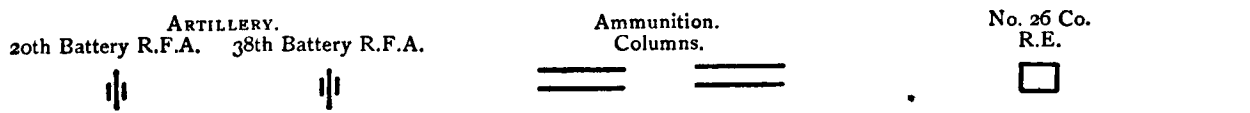
MOUNTED INFANTRY (LIEUT.-COLONEL ALDERSON).



FIRST DIVISION (LIEUT.-GENERAL LORD METHUEN).[1]



DIVISIONAL TROOPS.



[1] The Divisions had their Cavalry taken away, and transferred to the Cavalry Division under French.

[2] The other half was shut up in Kimberley.

SIXTH DIVISION (LIEUT.-GENERAL KELLY-KENNY).

Thirteenth Infantry Brigade

(MAJOR-GENERAL KNOX).

2nd East Kent (Buffs.) | 2nd Gloucester-shire. | 1st West Riding. | 1st Oxford-shire Light Infantry.

Field Hospital. | Bearer Co.

Eighteenth Infantry Brigade

(MAJOR-GENERAL STEPHENSON).

1st Yorkshire. | 1st Essex. | 1st Welch. | 2nd Warwick-shire.[1]

Field Hospital. | Bearer Co.

ARTILLERY.[2]

Batteries R.F.A.

76th. | 81st. | 82nd.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

Ammunition Columns. | No. 38 Co. R.E. | Field Hospital. | Supply Column.

[1] Did not join the Division until March 7th; until then it was employed on the Lines of Communication.

[2] With the Ninth Division until March 6th.

SEVENTH DIVISION (LIEUT.-GENERAL TUCKER).

Fourteenth Infantry Brigade
(MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. CHERMSIDE).

2nd Norfolk. | 2nd Lincolnshire. | 1st Scottish Borderers. | 2nd Hampshire.

Field Hospital. | Bearer Co.

Fifteenth Infantry Brigade
(MAJOR-GENERAL WAVELL).

2nd Cheshire. | 1st East Lancashire. | 2nd South Wales Borderers. | 2nd North Staffordshire.

Field Hospital. | Bearer Co.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

ARTILLERY.
Batteries R.F.A.
18th. | 62nd. | 75th.

3 Machine Guns.

Ammunition Columns.

No. 9 Co. R.E.

Supply Column.

NINTH DIVISION (MAJOR-GENERAL SIR H. COLVILE).

Third (Highland) Brigade
(MAJOR-GENERAL MACDONALD).

2nd Black Watch. | 2nd Seaforths. | 1st Argyll & Sutherlands. | 1st Highland Light Infantry.[1]

Field Hospital. | Volunteer Bearer Co.

Nineteenth Infantry Brigade
(MAJOR-GENERAL SMITH-DORRIEN).

2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Inf. | 2nd Shropshire Light Infantry. | 1st Gordon Highlanders. | 2nd Royal Canadians.

Field Hospital. | Bearer Co.

DIVISIONAL TROOPS.

ARTILLERY.[2]
Batteries R.F.A.
83rd. | 84th. | 85th.

Ammunition Columns.

No. 7 Co. R.E.

Supply Column.

[1] By Army Order, dated February 14th, this battalion was ordered to Kimberley.

[2] Did not join the Division until March 13th; until then the 82nd Field and 65th Howitzer batteries were attached to the Division.

CORPS TROOPS.

Mounted Infantry.[1]

Naval Brigade with four 4·7 inch and four 12 pounder guns.

Artillery.

65th (Howitzer) Battery R.F.A.



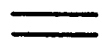
Royal Engineers.



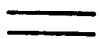
Field Telegraph Detachment.



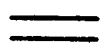
Balloon Detachment.



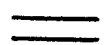
Bridge Train.



Ammunition Columns







[1] Its organisation was at first subjected to continual change. Shortly before the operations commenced it was decided to have eight regiments of mounted infantry, and, while the additional regiments were being raised, the organisation varied constantly, according as a new unit of mounted infantry was formed, and joined the army. At first there were to be two brigades of four regiments each, every regiment being divided into four companies. Colonel Hannay and Colonel Ridley were selected for the posts of brigade commanders. A detachment of mounted infantry, under Lieutenant-Colonel Alderson, was also allotted to French's cavalry division.

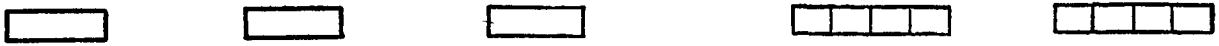
By Army Order of March 4th the mounted infantry was given a new and permanent organisation.

APPENDIX IV.—*continued.*

ORGANISATION OF THE MOUNTED INFANTRY, FROM MARCH 4TH, 1900.

First Brigade (LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ALDERSON).

Rimington's Guides. | New Zealand M.I. | Roberts' Horse. | 3rd Regiment M.I. | 1st Regiment M.I.



Second Brigade (LIEUTENANT-COLONEL LE GALLAIS).

New South Wales M.I. | Nesbitt's Horse. | Kitchener's Horse. | City Imperial Volunteers. | 8th Regiment M.I. | 6th Regiment M.I.



Third Brigade (LIEUTENANT-COLONEL MARTYR).

Queensland M.I. | West Riding M.I. | Essex M.I. | Durham M.I. | 4th Regiment M.I. | 2nd Regiment M.I.



Fourth Brigade (COLONEL RIDLEY).

Ceylon M.I. | City of Grahamstown Volunteers. | 7th Regiment M.I. | 5th Regiment M.I.



APPENDIX V.

HEADQUARTERS, JACOBSDAL,
February 16th, 1900.
Hour.*

The 19th brigade (Major-General Smith-Dorrien) will march at 3 o'clock to-morrow morning from Jacobsdal to Brown's Drift, and from there, if there should be water available, further at the discretion of the Brigadier.

The brigade will be accompanied by those of the City Imperial Volunteers, who are now at Jacobsdal, and also by the 65th and 82nd batteries, together with their ammunition column.

The 3rd (Highland) brigade will march at 3 a.m. from Wegdraai Drift to Brown's Drift, and, if necessary, further, accompanied by those of the City Imperial Volunteers now at Wegdraai.

The 14th brigade, together with all the troops now at Wegdraai Drift (with the exception of the City Imperial Volunteers and Kitchener's Horse), will march at 3 a.m. for Klip Drift, under Lieutenant-General Tucker. Kitchener's Horse will accompany the 3rd (Highland) brigade on the march, and will then be attached to Major-General Knox's brigade (the 13th).

The half company of the Pontoon troop now at Wegdraai Drift will park its pontoons on arrival at Jacobsdal, and will hand over the wagons and oxen to the "general transport."

For the Commander-in-Chief,
(Signed) W. KELLY.

JACOBSDAL,
February 16th, 1900.
7.20 p.m.

The General Officer commanding the 9th division will march at once with the 19th brigade and the divisional troops to Klip Drift, and from there along the south bank of the river to Klip Kraal Drift (distance 16 miles).

The 3rd (Highland) brigade will march for Klip Kraal Drift (distance 16 miles) immediately on receipt of this order. Guides accompany the officer, who is the bearer of this order.

The mounted infantry at Wegdraai Drift, with the exception of Kitchener's Horse and the City Imperial Volunteers, who are to come to Jacobsdal, will accompany the 3rd brigade.

All the other troops at Wegdraai will march early to-morrow with Lieutenant-General Tucker and the 14th brigade to Jacobsdal.

This order cancels the one previously issued.

(Signed) W. KELLY,
For the Commander-in-Chief.

---

* The hour was not filled in. The order reached the 9th division at midday.

APPENDIX VI.

INFANTRY LOSSES AT PAARDEBERG ON FEBRUARY 18, 1900.

Regiment.	Officers.		N.C.O.'s and Men.		Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.	Total.		Percentage of Losses.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Missing.		Officers.	N.C.O.'s and Men.	Officers.	Men.
2nd The Buffs	—	1	2	16	—	—	1	18	6	2·3
2nd Gloucestershire Regiment	—	—	5	20	—	—	—	25	—	3·5
1st West Riding Regiment ...	—	3 (1)*	22	98 (4)	—	—	3	120	13	15
1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry	2	4 (1)	5	27	—	1	6	33	30	6
1st Yorkshire Regiment ...	1	4	37	83	—	4	5	124	24	12
1st Welch Regiment	—	5	9	69 (2)	—	3	5	81	22	9
1st Essex Regiment	—	1	10	44	—	—	1	54	4	6
2nd Black Watch	—	4	19	71	—	—	4	90	21	12
2nd Seaforth Highlanders ...	1	6	50	96	—	1	7	147	35	18
1st Argyll and Sutherland ...	1	1	15	39	—	—	2	54	9	6
2nd Duke of Cornwall's L't Inf.	3	4	23	53	—	—	7	76	33	9·5†
2nd Shropshire Light Infantry	—	5	8	37	—	—	5	45	20·8	5
1st Gordon Highlanders ...	—	2	2	15	—	—	2	17	8	2
2nd Royal Canadian Regiment	—	1	21	62	—	—	1	83	2·5	9·5
Total	8	41	228	730	—	9	49	967	—	—

* Figures in brackets signify mortally wounded.

† The loss on p. 192 refers to the ½ batt.

APPENDIX VII.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE BRITISH HEAD-QUARTERS AND GENERAL CRONJE.

NEGOTIATIONS ON FEBRUARY 19th, 1900.

1. Cronje wrote to French asking for a 24 hours' armistice in order to bury the dead and collect the wounded.

2. French's reply (presumably composed by Lord Kitchener) :—

> "I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of to-day's date, and have forwarded your request to the Commander-in-Chief of the British army. I will communicate with you as soon as I receive his reply. Meanwhile I will not attack your laager. As you are already completely surrounded, I would advise you to surrender with your troops, when peace will again reign in the land.
>
> (Signed) J. D. P. FRENCH."

On receipt of this letter numerous Boers left their positions and came out into the open.

When Lord Roberts arrived he consulted the generals, with the result that a letter was sent to Cronje about noon, in which Lord Roberts broke off the armistice and demanded the unconditional surrender of the Boers.

Cronje wrote at 1 p.m. as follows :—"Since you are so unmerciful as not to accord me the time asked for, nothing remains for me to do but as you wish."

Lord Roberts replied at 2 p.m. :—"Accept surrender, please return with Caplain Liebmann."

Captain Liebmann, the bearer of this note, was fired at on his way to the laager, although he was provided with a flag of truce visible from afar, and the horse of the man who accompanied him was shot. The 3rd brigade, which had received orders to disarm the Boers, was also fired at on its march to the laager; as the men lay down at once they suffered no loss.

Captain Liebmann brought back the following answer from Cronje :—

> "Since you are so unmerciful as not to accord me the time asked for, nothing remains for me to do. You do as you wish. During my life-time I shall never surrender. If you wish to bombard, fire away.—DIXI."

Hostilities—it was then 3 p.m.—recommenced.

NEGOTIATIONS ON FEBRUARY 21ST, 1900.

Lord Roberts wrote:—"I have only heard to-day that there are women and children in your laager. If this is the case, I will be happy to accord them a safe conduct through my lines to any place they may select. I must express my regret to you that these women and children were exposed to our fire during the late attacks. We did not know of their presence with your troops. I have also heard that you are in want of surgeons and medicines. If you require them it will afford me great pleasure to send you either the one or the other."

Cronje replied:—"Safe-conduct declined. I accept the offer of surgeons and medicines, on the condition that when the surgeons have once entered this laager, they must not leave it until I have removed it to another place."

To this Lord Roberts answered:—"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this morning, which is the reply to my offer to send you surgeons and medicines. In view of the conditions which you impose, and of the circumstance that I cannot dispense with my surgeons for so indefinite a period, I am compelled reluctantly to withdraw my offer."

NEGOTIATIONS ON FEBRUARY 22nd, 1900.

In a letter of the 22nd Cronje referred again to this matter:—"On second thoughts, I beg to make the following proposal. You will supply me with a complete hospital equipment, surgeons, and medicines, to whom free entry shall be accorded. I will then allow the hospital to be erected 1,000 yards to the west of my laager."*

Lord Roberts rejected this proposal in the following terms:—"I regret that I do not possess sufficient hospital equipment for my own men. If my original offer be not accepted, I am not in a position to make another."

NEGOTIATIONS ON FEBRUARY 23rd, 1900.

Lord Roberts sent a verbal message on the 23rd to ask how many British prisoners and wounded Cronje had in his laager, to which the latter replied:—"Twelve prisoners and four wounded. I forward a list."

Lord Roberts at once wrote:—"Accept my best thanks for your letter. If you should send out our wounded and four of your own wounded, they shall be sent to the German Red Cross Hospital at Jacobsdal, and set at liberty on their recovery."

This was then carried out.

NOTE.—This correspondence has been translated from the German. [TRANS.]

* This was an extremely crafty artifice, for the Boers would then have been safe from any attack on just their most dangerously exposed side.

APPENDIX VIII.

TRANSPORT AND SUPPLY.

Before the war broke out it had been intended to concentrate all the British forces in the central portion of Cape Colony, on either side of the railway leading from Port Elizabeth to Bloemfontein and Pretoria. The advance on the capital of the Orange Free State was then to have begun at the end of December, according to Buller's original intention, after the transport service should have been organised in Cape Colony during the months of October and November.

All these arrangements, however, had been upset by the unexpected events which had taken place in Natal, and which had diverted the British operations prematurely into another and unlooked-for direction. It had been impossible to equip properly with transport, in so short a time, the forces operating in Natal under Buller, and in Cape Colony under Gatacre and Methuen. The transport arrangements were indeed so incomplete that the troops could not, for the time being, operate for more than two or three days away from the railway lines. The consequence was that the generals were obliged to cling anxiously to the railway, "their sole foster-mother" in every enterprise upon which they embarked. By the end of December, however, it had been practicable to so far give effect to the original plan as to provide the elements of a really large train in Cape Colony, by purchasing many thousands of oxen, mules, and carts. When Lord Roberts arrived in South Africa he found these in an unorganised mass, and to him is due the merit of having elaborated a system of transport suitable to the peculiar conditions of the theatre of war.

When the war began the transport system of the British army was based upon the "regimental transport," which supplied the troops in the first instance. This was again divided into the "first line transport," consisting of ammunition, medical, entrenching tool and water carts, and into the "second line transport," carrying supplies for several days, as well as the baggage, tents, and other articles. There were also brigade, divisional, and army corps supply columns, each of which carried supplies for one day. The system was that each lower unit replenished its wants daily from the next higher one, while there

was also a supply park with supplies for three days for an entire army corps.

The regimental transport was subordinate to its own unit, and was manned by it. This had the great advantage that the troops were zealous in looking after their own transport, being personally interested in its efficiency. The Army Service Corps administered and looked after the supply columns and the supply park.

In the opinion of Lord Roberts this organisation had several disadvantages. At the commencement of the war it had been laid down that the regimental transport was to be very mobile, and consist of light carts drawn by mules, whereas the supply columns and parks were to be transported by oxen. The latter could only march from 12 to 15 miles daily, while the former could cover from 18 to 22 miles. While the mules would eat at any hour of the day or night, the oxen only fed by day, so that they could not be worked at pleasure by day or night. There had not been, at first, enough mules available, so that teams of oxen had to take their places, with the result that mobility was impaired, owing to the use of two kinds of teams in one unit, and their different feeding hours. There was also another great disadvantage, due to the fact that, with the existing organisation, it was impossible to make the fullest use of the material available. During the operations it had been necessary to employ numerous units to protect the Lines of Communication, and they had retained their regimental transport, without, as a rule, requiring it, while the troops engaged in operations against the enemy were frequently in urgent need of it, their mobility being greatly impaired for want of it. In order to remedy this evil it was resolved to reorganise the transport completely.

The troops had the whole of their train taken away, with the exception of the ammunition, water, and medical carts; it was then placed directly under the Army Service Corps and the Commander-in-Chief. It thus became possible to utilise for the field army the regimental transport, which had not hitherto been employed, and which consisted, for the most part, of the valuable and mobile mule transport. It is true that the train of the field army was thereby considerably increased, but, on the other hand, it was rendered far more mobile, so that the force became more independent of the railway. The available *personnel* of the Army Service Corps was far too weak to allow of the retention of the regulation internal organisation of the train under the new system. It was, therefore, resolved to attach officers of the combatant troops to the transport, and to organise this so as to reduce the *personnel* to a minimum. All the transport was divided into companies, to each of which only two officers were allotted, and it thus became possible to provide all the companies with Army

Service Corps *personnel.** They were divided into light and heavy companies respectively; the former had each 49 carts with teams of six or eight mules, while the latter had 100 carts with teams of 12 or 14 oxen, natives being employed as drivers. The length of a light transport company in order of march was about 1,300 yards, but that of a heavy one was nearly 3 miles. The latter was, therefore, very difficult to manage, and, if the enemy had been at all enterprising, would have required a very strong escort. The endurance of the mules† was very great throughout, in spite of scarcity of grass, and comparatively few were lost, notwithstanding the great strain to which they had to be subjected. Supply columns were not intended to be permanently attached to particular bodies of troops, but merely according to the circumstances of the moment. As regards the force intended for the relief of Kimberley, two light transport companies were allotted to each division of infantry, that is to say, one for each brigade. They carried the divisional baggage and a two-days' supply of rations and forage, following immediately in rear of their units.

Simultaneously with the reorganisation of the transport, arrangements were made to procure a sufficient quantity of supplies. Besides those despatched from England‡ others had been purchased in Cape Colony, and the stocks were very much larger than had been at first anticipated. These were placed in numerous magazines along the railway lines, so that by the middle of January there was a reserve supply for two months for the entire army, which at the end of January required rations for 150,000 men and 80,000 horses and mules. For the relief of Kimberley, under Lord Roberts, large quantities of supplies had been placed along the De Aar—Kimberley railroad, while several millions of rations and forage had been collected at Modder River Station, Orange River Station, and De Aar.

Arrangements had not been concluded with contractors for the delivery of supplies before the war broke out; when, therefore, it did commence, unheard of prices had to be paid. Lord Kitchener, it is true, lays the blame for this in part on the ignorance of the Army Service Corps officers concerning the

* When the war commenced the *personnel* of the Army Service Corps was quite insufficient. When the first reinforcements were despatched from England, 99 officers and 1,000 men of the A.S.C. also arrived at Cape Town, and these, in the opinion of Colonel Richardson, Director of the A.S.C., saved the situation, "without them we should have had a catastrophe." The *personnel* was increased later to 233 officers and 4,672 men, who were always employed continually.

† The number of mules imported from America, Italy, and India, up to May 1, 1900, was 17,143.

‡ Two steamers left England weekly, carrying only equipment and supplies.

state of the international money market, and on their inability to deal with financial questions of magnitude Owing to his representations "financial officers" were appointed to the Staffs of all the larger commands during a later stage of the war. They had special knowledge of finance, and were partly civilians, partly professional soldiers. They were specially charged with the scrutiny of sums due and claims for compensation, the financial supervision of the railways and telegraphs, the management of financial and great business questions, and similar matters. Their appointment resulted later in large savings being effected, all contracts being subject to their revision, so that in some instances the prices were reduced by one-third. Lord Kitchener has stated that there was nobody at Headquarters who was an authority on finance. and who had sufficient time, knowledge, and ability to deal with financial questions on a large scale. If there had been financial advisers at the commencement instead of towards the end of the war, immense economies could have been effected, and great and needless expense avoided. The Commander-in-Chief could thus have been relieved from a mass of work with which he ought not to have had to deal. Lord Kitchener's experiences in South Africa convinced him that a finance officer should accompany every army corps in a future war, and that a financial adviser of high rank should be attached to the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief in the field. His Lordship has added that this is especially necessary at the commencement of the operations, because the generals have no time to occupy themselves with financial affairs, while the small cost of finance officers in the South African campaign could have saved the State many millions of pounds.

APPENDIX IX.

TABLE SHOWING THE STRENGTH ON MOBILISATION OF THE UNDERMENTIONED UNITS, TOGETHER WITH THE NUMBER OF MEN SERVING WITH THE COLOURS AND THOSE BELONGING TO THE RESERVE.

	Men with Colours	Reservists.	Total.	Remarks.
(A.)—Cavalry Division.				
A.—CAVALRY.				
1st BRIGADE—				
2nd Dragoons	372	186	558	
6th Dragoon Guards	429	129	558	
2nd BRIGADE—				
Household Cavalry	574	—	574	
10th Hussars	418	147	565	
12th Lancers	426	126	552	
3rd BRIGADE—				
9th Lancers	497	—	497	From India.
16th Lancers	—	—	—	Not known.
B.—7 BATTERIES R.H.A.				
T	129	46	175	
U	145	33	178	
Q	145	35	180	
G	131	47	178	
P	127	52	179	
R	134	46	180	
O	140	40	180	
C.—MOUNTED INFANTRY.				
8 Companies	1163	—	1163	
(B.)—First Division.				
GUARDS' BRIGADE—				
3rd Grenadiers	685	399	1084	
1st Coldstreams	737	346	1083	
2nd Coldstreams	469	620	1089	
1st Scots Guards	640	448	1088	
9th BRIGADE—				
1st Northumberland Fusiliers	815	—	815	At De Aar.
1st Loyal North Lancashire	971	—	971	
2nd Northamptonshire	441	541	982	
2nd Yorkshire Light Infantry	492	—	492	At De Aar.
	450	—	450	From Mauritius.
ARTILLERY—				
20th Battery R.F.A.	99	71	170	
38th „ „	94	79	173	

	Men with Colours.	Reservists.	Total.	Remarks.
(C.)—Sixth Division.				
13th Brigade—				
2nd East Kent	507	446	953	
2nd Gloucestershire	442	484	926	
1st West Riding	676	303	979	
1st Oxfordshire Light Infantry	438	351	789	
18th Brigade—				
1st Yorkshire	545	427	972	
1st Essex	443	469	912	
1st Welsh	500	320	820	
Artillery—				
Staff	6	7	13	
76th Battery R.F.A.	81	89	170	
81st „ „	62	108	170	
82nd „ „	64	106	170	
Ammunition Column	7	116	123	
Engineers	105	105	210	
(D.)—Seventh Division.				
14th Brigade—				
1st King's Own Scottish Borderers ...	488	611	1099	
2nd Norfolk	438	531	969	
2nd Lincolnshire	543	430	973	
2nd Hampshire	399	438	837	
15th Brigade—				
1st East Lancashire	370	577	947	
2nd Cheshire	517	508	1025	
2nd South Wales Borderers	455	608	1063	
2nd North Staffordshire	450	547	997	
Artillery—				
Staff and 18th Battery R.F.A.	—	—	191	Detailed composition not known.
62nd Battery R.F.A.	—	—	173	
75th „ „	—	—	173	
2 Ammunition Columns	—	—	210	
Engineers	121	90	211	
(E.)—Ninth Division.				
3rd Brigade—				
2nd Black Watch	588	425	1013	
2nd Seaforths	466	461	927	
1st Argyll and Sutherland	533	549	1082	
19th Brigade—				
2nd Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry ..	385	555	940	
2nd Shropshire Light Infantry	532	373	904	
1st Gordon Highlanders	363	491	854	
1st Royal Canadians	766	285	1051	
Artillery—				
Staff	12	—	12	
83rd Battery R.F.A.	121	48	169	
84th „ „	71	99	170	
85th „ „	107	63	170	
Ammunition Column	7	119	126	

INDEX.

Abon's Dam, cavalry at, 148; and Cronje's retreat, 156, 172.
Albrecht, Major, at Magersfontein, 94, 107; on lyddite, 228.
Aldworth, Lieut.-Colonel, killed, 192.
Aliwal North, rail to, 10; garrisoned, 78.
American Military Attaché, and Lord Kitchener, 226.
Ammunition, Boer supplies of, 20; rounds per rifle (British), 30; British artillery, 30; expenditure not extraordinary at Magersfontein, 118, 119; Boer artillery explodes at Paardeberg, 201; and customs of war, 212.
Armaments, Boer, 18-21; British, 30, 31.
Armistice, and Cronje, 198.
Army Service Corps, energy of, 152.
Artillery, Boer, 20, 21; Boer tactics, 21; British training and tactics, 29; in Sudan, 29; British guns, 30, 31; at siege of Ladysmith, 41; Boer at Colenso, 58; Buller's orders at Colenso, 60; at Colenso, 60–69; Boers afraid of, 82; bombard Magersfontein, 93; at Magersfontein, 102, 118; aids Highlanders, 103; Boer at Magersfontein, 104, 109; British change position, 104; ammunition expenditure not extraordinary, 118, 119; exhausting march, 142; relief of Kimberley, 145, 147; at Dronfield, 150; surprise Cronje, 162–164; at Paardeberg, 182, 184, 189, 190, 195, 199, 200, 201, 202, 204, 227; tactics, 219; and reconnaissance, 114, 219; error at Paardeberg, 219, 220; effect of lyddite, 227, 228.

Babington, General, at Magersfontein, 103; at Koodoesberg, 136.
Baggage train, size of British, 79.
Balloon detachment, at Magersfontein, 107; at Paardeberg, 204.
Barton, General, opposed by superior Boer forces in Natal, 45; ordered to Chieveley, 51; at Colenso, 59, 66, 69.
Belmont, 80; action at, 81.
Benson, Major R. A., at Magersfontein, 97, 100.
Bethulie, rail to, 10, 131.
Bloemfontein, rail to, 10; Lord Roberts' objective, 130, 134.
Boers, The, move North in 1835, 1; views of in 1899, 3; mode of life, 11; defeat Zulus, 12; proclaim independence, 1880, 14; prepare for war, 18; forces of, 19; armament, 19–21; superiority of in musketry, 30; and Afrikanders, 33; distribution and strength, Oct., 1899, 33; invade Natal, 33; at Elandslaagte, 37; invest Ladysmith, 39, 41; do not pursue on Oct. 30, 1899, 41; advance towards Durban, 41; lose time, 42; retreat across Tugela, 42; make no sign, 49, 52; force at Colenso, 57; occupy Hlangwane Hill, 58; at Colenso, 61, 62, 65, 67, 68, 69; cross Tugela, 68; their views on Colenso, 73; deceive Buller, 75; defensive tactics at Colenso, 77; result of their Natal successes, 78; regardless of baggage, 80; change their tactics, 82; at Modder river, 83; retreat, 84; shaken by Methuen, 85; P. Cronje's force, 87; occupy Magersfontein, 88; artifices of, 89, 264; estimated strength at Magersfontein, 90; and Methuen's reconnaissance, 92, 93; at Magersfontein nearly retreat, 106; musketry at Magersfontein, 107; excellent on defensive, 121; bad leadership, 128; unaware of Roberts' concentration, 136; esti-

mated strength, Feb. 8, 1900, 137; mobility diminished, 137; surprised by cavalry, 142; and relief of Kimberley, 145, 147; terror of Boers, 147; not pursued, 148; capture large supplies, 150, 151; retreat from Magersfontein, 154; destroy wells, 159; Cronje's night march, 161; surprised by French, 162–164; uncontrollable disorder, 162; attack French, 164; could have escaped, 165; escape hopeless, 168; bad military system, 174; and patrols, 177; Paardeberg position, 161, 179; reinforced at Paardeberg, 187, 194; escape still possible, 226; artillery ammunition exploded, 201; sufferings of, 204; wish to break through, 207; Council of War, 207; surrender, 210; number of prisoners, 210; well treated by British, 210, 211; moral effect of surrender, 213; want of artillery, 219, 227; fire tactics, 220; no tactical training, 221; in attack, 223; at Nitral's Nek, 224; musketry fire, 225.

Bosjespan, Boer laager captured, 158.

Botha, General Louis, opposed to Boer retreat across Tugela, 42; assumes command at Colenso, 47; plans for the battle, 57–59; his chief anxiety, 57.

Botha, General Philip, and Kitchener's kopje, 205.

Brabant, Colonel, 129, 214.

British forces, in Africa, 1899, 1, 2; faulty training of, 23–25, 27–29, 121; reinforced from India, 32; strength of, 32; surprised at Dundee, 33; concentrate at Ladysmith, 39; reinforced in Natal, 42; order of battle broken up, 44; reinforcements for, 45; in Natal, Dec. 5, 48; do not reconnoitre, 49, 52; orders for Colenso, 53–56; reasons for failure at Colenso, 71–73; their baggage, 79; bound to railway, 80; mobility of, 80; 9th and naval brigades formed, 80; paucity of mounted troops, 80, 128; under Methuen reinforced, 90; bad arrangements for Magersfontein, 96; gallantry at Magersfontein, 103; needless hardships of, 115; distribution, Jan., 1900, 127; Lord Roberts concentrates, 135, 136; 9th division formed, 135; ordered to advance, 138; effect on of relief of Kimberley, 149; on half rations, 153; pursuit of Cronje, 156–167; officers' practical sense, 169; endurance of, 171, 175; exhaustion of at Paardeberg, 192; kindness to Cronje's force, 210, 211; chivalrous behaviour, 211; reprisals justified, 211; general advance of, 214; constant change of tactics, 219; their dash, 222; bad effect of Paardeberg on, 225, 226.

British War office, and Boers, 11; in 1881, 15; Intelligence Division, 18; neglects experience, 23; its good points, 23; difficulties of, 24.

Broadwood, General, pursues Cronje, 160; and de Wet, 200.

Buller, General Sir Redvers, reaches Cape Town, 43; goes to Natal, 45; asks for reinforcements, 45; goes to Clery at Chieveley, 8; effect of this, 48; expects little opposition, 49; plans for Colenso, 51; changes his mind, 51; decides on frontal attack, 53; orders to artillery at Colenso, 60; his bravery, 63; sees himself deceived, 66; orders retreat, 67; message to White, 70; his career and convictions, 71, 72; does not grasp situation, 72, 73; relieves Ladysmith, 214.

Bullock, Colonel, at Colenso, 68.

Buluwayo, rail to, 10.

Burghersdorp junction, 10.

Burghership and British, 1.

Campaign, Plans of, Boer, 33; Sir G. White's, 32, 39; British, 43; change in British, 78; Lord Roberts and Kimberley, 130, 137; Bloemfontein objective, 130, 134; criticism difficult, 171.

Cape Colony, taken by Dutch, and British, 1; and Boers, 33, 44; private enterprise, 129.

Cape Town, 9, 44.

Carbines, compared with Mauser, 30.

Cavalry, faulty training, 24, 28; at Talana, 34; at Elandslaagte, 37;

on Oct. 30, 1899, 40; at Colenso, 59, 64; want of, 80, 128; attempt to cross Modder River, 92; at Magersfontein, 103, 104, 106, 107, 118; want of wire-cutters, 113; division formed, 128, 135; to relieve Kimberley promptly, 138; advance of, 139; cross Riet River, 140; loses touch with Boers, 140; formation on march, 139; surprised by Boers, 141; surprise Boers, 142; cross Modder, 142; capture Boer supplies, 142; tactics, 140, 142; great charge, 145–147; in future wars, 147; fails to report Cronje's retreat, 156; achieve nothing at Dronfield, 159; wrongly employed, 160, 172; pursue Cronje, 160; surprise him, 162–164; charge of 10th Hussars, 164; remarkable achievement of, 165; tactics on Feb. 16 and 17, 1900, 166; valuable lessons, 166; enormous loss of horses, 176; discipline, 176; scouting in future wars, 177; reconnaissance, 53, 75, 83, 90, 112, 113, 140, 143, 148, 176, 177; at Paardeberg, 196, 200, 202; recapture Kitchener's kopje, 203.

Civil administration of Boers, 13.

Clements, General, 135, 214.

Clery, Gen. Sir F., commands in Natal, 45; his force, 48; orders for Colenso, 53–56.

Climate, 6, 7, 133; affects efficiency, 7; temperature, 6, 134; dust, 134; rain, 134; at Paardeberg, 204.

Colenso, 11; British reconnoitre, 46; battle of, 59–70; British retreat, 67, 68; but victory still possible, 73.

Colesberg, rail to, 10.

Colley, General Sir G., 15–17.

Colonial troops raised, 2, 29; increased, 129.

Colonial wars, difficulties of, 23; prejudicial effects of, 24, 25, 114; artillery in Sudan, 29,

Colvile, General Sir H., differs from Methuen, 109; lack of energy at Magersfontein, 119; fear of responsibility, 151; on marches, 175; on Highlanders at Paardeberg, 185, 186; on infantry attack, 185, 186; and Kitchener, 191, 192; attacks Boers at Paardeberg, 208, 209.

Command and rank, phenomena of, 217, 229, 230.

Commandants, Boer, 13.

Communication, lines of, 79, 80, 84, 131; require constant care, 153; drastic changes, 169; and Boers, 227.

Cronje, General P., after Modder river, 86; his force, 87; objects to Magersfontein position, 87; orders for Magersfontein, 93; nearly captured, 102; prevents Boer retreat, 106; aware of British movements, 154; retreats from Magersfontein, 155; night march, 161; thinks he has escaped, 161; position on Modder, 161, 179; resumes retreat, 162; surprised by French, 162–164; mistaken, 163; could have escaped, 165; his capture chiefly due to French, 165; sees escape hopeless, 168; unfitted for high command, 174; his hopes, 197; escape still possible, 199, 226; difficulties, 204, 207; and Boer leaders, 207; Council of War, 207; surrenders, 210; results of surrender, 213, 214.

Cultivation, 133.

Customs of war, observance of, 211, 212.

De Aar junction, 9, 10; garrisoned, 78.

Despatch riders, 143.

Discipline, Boer, 14; British, 176.

Distances in Africa and Europe, 10; and plan of campaign, 132.

Distribution and strength, British, 1, 2; in Natal, 32; of Boers, Oct., 1899, 33; of British, Nov., 1899, 44; of 1st Army Corps, Nov., 1899, 45; of British and Boers, end of Nov., 1899, 47; British in Natal, Dec. 5, 48; Boers at Colenso, 58; Ninth and Naval brigades formed, 80; Boers under P. Cronje, 87; British at Magersfontein, 91; Boers at Magersfontein, 94; of British, Jan., 1900, 127, 135; Ninth division formed, 135; cavalry division formed, 128, 135; British, Feb., 1900, 138; of Boers, estimated, Feb. 8, 1900, 137.

Doornkop Spruit, 58.

Drakensberg mountains, Natal frontier, 11.

Drieput, Cronje's retreat towards, 155, 156; action at, 157.
Dronfield, cavalry at, 159.
Dundee, 32; British surprised at, 33.
Dundonald, Lord, at Colenso, 59, 65.
Durban, railway, 10; carrying capacity, 131.
Dutch settlers, 1.

East London, rail from, 10, 131.
Eighteenth brigade at Paardeberg, 194–196.
Elandslaagte, 34; action at, 34–39.
Engineers, equipment of, 31; and transport, 152; balloon at Paardeberg, 204.
Equipment, British, 31; spade withdrawn from infantry, 31; cavalry want wire-cutters, 113; and transport, 152.
Erasmus, General, succeeds Joubert, 47.

Fauresmith, 137.
Ferreira, Commandant, advice to Cronje, 168.
Fetherstonhaugh, Gen., 80.
Field Cornets, 13.
Field fortification, British want of tools, 31; Boer at Magersfontein, 88-89; Boer at Paardeberg, 180, 201, 212; British, 203, 225.
Fire-arms, modern, 30, 113, 121, 135; *v.* cavalry, 147; favour defence, 166, 218; and scouting, 177; Boer use of, 220; in attack, 220; in defence, 225.
Forts in Transvaal, 18.
Fourteenth Brigade, and supply column, 150, 151; surprised, 201.
Franco-German War, surprises of, 76, 77; Magersfontein and St. Privat compared, 116; German delusions, 217; personal quarrels, 229.
French, General, at Elandslaagte, 34–39; escapes from Ladysmith, 45; at Rensburg, 127; to command cavalry division, 135; reconnoitres Riet river, 139; crosses Riet river, 140; his tactics, 140, 142; relieves Kimberley, 145–148; untiring energy, 149; accomplishes the seemingly impossible, 163; discovers Cronje, 163; Cronje's capture chiefly due to, 165; early hours, 176; recaptures Kitchener's Kopje, 202.
Frere, British reach, 46.
Fronemann, Commandant, joins de Wet, 199.
Frontal attacks, at Laing's Nek, 15; Modder river, 83; difficulty of, 85; Magersfontein, 91; unsupported, 117; Paardeberg, 182, 183, 190.
Frontiers, Orange Free State and Griqualand west, 88; wire fencing, 112.

Galopaud, Lieutenant, 68.
Ganger's hut, 92.
Garrisons, British, too weak, 1, 2.
Gatacre, General Sir W., at Queenstown, 44; defeated at Stormberg, 52; at Sterkstroom, 127; occupies Stormberg, 214.
German Military Attaché, remarks on Colenso, 77; cavalry discipline, 176; British tactics, 206.
German military regulations, 25, 177, 221.
German officers, on British scouting, 75, 141; praise British humanity, 211; on customs of war, 212; on British dash, 222; and Nitral's Nek, 224; musketry fire, 224; lyddite, 228.
Glencoe, 11, 32.
Gomba stream, 65.
Gordon, General (of Khartum), advice neglected, 42.
Gordon Highlanders at Magersfontein, 107–109; their bad luck, 117.
Government, weak Boer, 13, 14.
Graspan, fight at, 82.
Grobler's Kloof, 50, 65.
Guards' Brigade, The, sent to Orange River, 79; surprised at Modder River, 83; at Magersfontein, 106, 117.
Gun Hill (Colenso), 60.
Gun Hill [Paardeberg], 162, 182.

Hall, Colonel, R.A., at Magersfontein, 104.
Hamilton, Colonel Ian, at Elandslaagte, 36, 37.
Hannay, Colonel, 129, 137; omits to reconnoitre, 149; loses touch with Cronje, 161; charges Boers and is killed, 193, 194.

Harrismith, 11, 132.
Hart, General, at Colenso, 59, 64, 67, 69.
Headquarter Hill, 88.
Heliographs, Boer, 22, 200; and Kimberley, 148.
Highland Brigade, moves to Headquarter Hill, 92; orders for, at Magersfontein, 95; advances, 97; delayed, 100; in confusion, 101; gallantry of, 102; losses, 103; endurance, 103; effect of Boer fire, 107; retires, 108, 109; losses, 108; and Prussian Guards, 116; foredoomed to failure, 116; at Paardeberg, 184, 185.
Hildyard, General, surrounded in Natal, 45; at Colenso, 59, 63, 64, 67–69; sound tactics, 77.
Hlangwane Hill, 50; importance of, 57, 58; on Dec. 15, 1899, 65; key of the position, 66, 74.
Holcroft, Capt., 19.
Hopetown, bridge at, 9; garrisoned, 78.
Horses, loss of, 142, 159, 160, 176; on reduced rations, 153, 206; exhaustion of, 164, 200.
Horse-sickness, 8.
Hospital ships, 70.

India, troops from, 2; military training in, 24, 29, 218.
Infantry, training of British, 23; volley firing, 24; in attack, 26; in defence, 27; traditions of, 28; rifle, 30; give up entrenching equipment, 31; strength of battalions, 32; at Ladysmith on Oct. 30, 1899, 40; Highlanders' formation at Magersfontein, 97–99, 100; Highlanders retire, 108, 109; Magersfontein and St. Privat compared, 116; formations at Magersfontein, 117; Colvile on attack, 185, 186; use of the spade, 203; tactics at Paardeberg, 216; tactics constantly changed, 219; attack formations, 221–223; musketry fire, 225; and machine guns, 228.
Intelligence Division (War Office), compiles "Military Notes," 18; and Boer artillery, 21; recommends cavalry, 22.
Isandlhwana, effect of, 14.

Jacobsdal, Boer depôt, 86; occupied by British, 149.
Jameson raid, 18.
Johannesburg, rail to, 10.
Joubert, General, 33; refuses to pursue, Oct. 30, 1899, 41; superstitious, 42; resigns command-in-chief and is succeeded by Erasmus and Schalk Burgher, 47.

Kaffirs, 13, 14; employed at Colenso, 57; before Magersfontein, 87; and military intelligence, 137.
Karroo, The, 9.
Kelly-Kenny, General, issues instructions, 130; to Naauwpoort, 135; arrives Ramdam, 141; Riet river, 143; Modder, 144; overtakes Cronje, 167; secrecy of Lord Roberts, 138, 178; supersession of, 229.
de Kiel Drift, 7th Division reaches, 140.
Kimberley, origin of, 10; siege intended, 33; invested, 78; Lord Roberts' plan for relief, 138; relief of, 145–148; siege of exaggerated, 148; effect of relief on British, 149; relief not urgent, 172; main supply depôt, 204.
Kitchener's Horse, raised, 129; occupy Kitchener's Kopje, 184; captured by de Wet, 187.
Kitchener's Kopje, 162, 182; occupied by Kitchener's Horse, 184; captured by de Wet, 187; and Broadwood, 200; 2,000 Boers at, 202; de Wet evacuates, 203; Boers fail to recapture, 205, 206; and Cronje, 200, 226.
Kitchener, Lord, Chief of Staff, 125; his career, 126; accompanies 6th division, 144; perceives Cronje's retreat, 156; grasps the situation, 156; orders pursuit, 156; and Kelly-Kenny, 156, 229; reports Boer retreat 157; informs French, 158; assumes command of M.I., 168; overtakes Cronje, 168; his energy, 168; decides on immediate attack, 180; decision sound, but execution faulty, 181, 215–218; orders 6th division to attack, 182; orders assault, 190; his error, 190; his unfortunate relations with generals, 191; orders M.I. to assault, 193; assault fails, 194; armistice, 198; leaves Paardeberg, 203; want of practice,

217; a "born soldier," 218; effect of Paardeberg on, 226; supersession of Kelly-Kenny, 229.
Kock, General, occupies Elandslaagte, 34.
Komati Poort, 33.
Koodoesberg, action at, 136.
Koodoes Rand Drift, Boers at, 161.

Ladysmith, 10, 11; invested, 39; relieved, 214.
Laing's Nek, tunnel, 11; action at, 15.
Langeberg farm, 87, 89.
Lines of communication, 79, 80, 84, 131; require constant care, 153; drastic changes, 169; and de Wet, 227.
Long, Col. R. A., at Colenso, 60–63, 66.
Losses in action, at Laing's Nek, 16; at Majuba, 17; exaggerated, 25; at Elandslaagte, 38; at Nicholson's Nek, 40; at Colenso, 69; German at Vionville, 77; at Belmont, 82; Modder river, 84; Highland Brigade, 108; Magersfontein, 110, 120; deductions from, 121; Koodoesberg, 136; Rodepan, 139; relief of Kimberley, 146; pursuit of Cronje, 158; Cornwall Light Infantry, 192; Paardeberg, 197, 210.
Lyddite, trifling effect of, 93, 227, 228; stench, 202.
Lyttelton, General Hon. N., at Colenso, 59, 67, 69.

MacDonald, General, at Koodoesberg, 136; at Paardeberg, 186.
Machine guns, Boer, 20, 21; British, 30; effect on nerves, 228.
Mafeking, rail to, 10; siege intended, 33; invested, 78.
Magersfontein, probable effect of on Buller, 52; position at, 87–89; Methuen's reconnaissance in force, 92, 93; Cronje issues orders for, 93, 94; Methuen's orders for, 95, 96; insufficient reserve, 96; battle of, 97–110; isolated attacks, 103; artillery at, 104, 107, 109; Boers nearly retreat, 106; Highlanders retire, 108; needless hardships of British, 115; their gallantry, 116; conclusions to be drawn from the battle, 121.
Majuba, 16, 17.
Manœuvres, want of, 25, 27, 28, 29; in India, 29, 218; Lord Kitchener on, 218.
Maps, scarcity of, 29, 49, 79, 81.
Marches, training in night, 28; exhausting, 140, 142, 143; Cronje's night march, 161; Naval Brigade and 9th Division, 167, 168; by night, 175, 198.
Medical service, at Colenso, 69, 70; at Magersfontein, splendid, 120.
Merton siding, 87, 88, 89.
Methuen, Lord, on reconnaissance, 75; to relieve Kimberley, 79; prefers attacking to manœuvring, 80; opinion of Boers, 80; crosses frontier, 80; at Belmont, 81; forms wrong conclusion, 83; at Modder River, 83; criticised, 85; calls up reinforcements, 90; his force, 91; resolves on frontal attack at Magersfontein, 91; want of information, 95; orders for Magersfontein, 95, 96; unaware of state of affairs, 105; and Magersfontein criticised, 111, 112, 114, 116; collects fresh supplies, 152; marches to Kimberley, 204.
Middelburg, 10, 132.
Military administration of Boers, 13.
Military history, lessons of, 114, 173; personal quarrels, 229.
Military service of Boers, 13, 14.
Military training, faulty British, 23–25, 27–29, 121, 218; in India, 24, 29, 218.
Mobilisation, of British, 3; Boer system, 13, 14; rapid British, 43.
Modder River, action at, 83; and pursuit of Cronje, 161, 162.
Modern fire-arms, 30, 113, 121, 135; *v.* cavalry, 147; favour defence, 166, 220; and scouting, 177; Boer use of, 220; in attack, 221; in defence, 225, 226.
Moss Drift, 92; Yorkshire Light Infantry at, 107, 120.
Mounted infantry, 2; reason for, 23; use of, 24, 29; at Colenso, 59; Methuen's want of, 80; at Magersfontein, 106, 107, 118; largely increased, 128; its value, 129; joins cavalry, 139; omits to reconnoitre, 149; loses touch with Cronje, 161, 168; Kitchener orders assault, 193.
Musketry fire, preference for volleys,

24, 28; neglected, 27; at Elandslaagte, 38; Boer at Colenso, 61, 77; Boer at Magersfontein, 107; Boer at Paardeberg, 183, 184, 187, 190, 201, 202, 203. 223; 19th Brigade, 190; British did not grasp importance of, 218, 219; Boer, 220; in attack, 221; in defence, 225, 226.

Naauwpoort, rail to, 10; garrisoned, 78.
Natal, described, 10; invaded, 33; situation in Nov., 1899, 45.
Naval Brigade, formed, 80; splendid march of, 168.
Naval guns, necessity for, 31; in Natal, 48; bombard Fort Wylie, 52; Buller's orders at Colenso, 60; and Lord Methuen, 91; at Paardeburg, 199, 201.
Navy, distribution of, 3.
Netherlands railway, importance of, 11; aids Boers, 22.
Nicholson's Nek, 40.
Nineteenth Brigade at Paardeberg, 189–192; 208, 209.
Norval's Pont, rail to, 10, 131.

Obstacles, 112, 113, 133.
Orange Free State, area, 5; prepares for war, 18; men available and armament, 19–21.
Orange River, 9, 10.
Outbreak of the war, causes of, 1, 3, 18.

Paardeberg, Cronje's position at, 179; 6th Division attacks, 182; Highland Brigade attacks, 185, 186; artillery, 182, 184, 189, 195, 199, 201, 202, 219, 227; 19th Brigade, 189–192; Kitchener orders assault, 190; assault fails, 192; exhaustion of troops, 192; charge of Mounted Infantry, 194; 18th Brigade, 194–196; cavalry division, 196; results of Feb. 18, 1900, 197; escape possible for Boers, 199; British recapture Kitchener's Kopje, 203; Boer sufferings, 204: Cronje's difficulties, 204, 207; weather, 204; Boers fail to retake Kitchener's Kopje, 205, 206; Royal Canadians attack, 208, 209; Cronje surrenders, 210; Kitchener criticised, 215–218; faulty British tactics, 218; and German infantry regulations, 221; British dash, 222; musketry fire, 225; bad effect of Feb. 18 on British, 225, 226.
Physical features, 8; at Colenso, 49; near Orange River, 79; effect of on operations, 131–133.
Pietermaritzburg, 10.
Plans of Campaign, Boer, 33; Sir G. White's, 32, 39; British, 43; change in British, 78; Lord Roberts and Kimberley, 130–132; Bloemfontein objective, 130; criticism difficult, 171.
Pole-Carew, General, 95, 96; at Magersfontein, 104, 105, 115.
Political considerations, and Governor of Natal, 32; influence Boer plans, 32, 33; and Lord Roberts, 171.
Population in South Africa, 5.
Port Alfred, 44.
Port Elizabeth, 10, 44, 131.
Potgieter's Drift, 51.
Powder, 21, 121, 166, 177, 206.
Press criticisms, falseness of, 211, 212.
Pretoria, rail to, 10, 11.
Public opinion, and capacity of generals, 25; and Kimberley, 79, 171; and Lord Roberts, 171.

Queenstown, rail to, 10; occupied by small British force, 44.

Railways, 9–11; influence Methuen's plans, 80, 91; influence operations, 130, 131.
Rank, local and temporary, phenomena of, 156, 217; and personal friction, 229.
Rebellion, Boer, in 1880, 14.
Reconnaissance, want of maps, 29: poor results of, 29; in Natal, 49; neglected, 74, 75, 84, 90, 112–114; 141, 143, 148, 149, 176, 177; difficulty of, 83, 112, 113, 176, 177; in force (Magersfontein) useless, 92, 93; in future wars, 177; and artillery, 114, 219.
Reinforcements, British, 1, 2, 45, 90, 135; Boer at Paardeberg, 187, 194.

Reprisa's, British justified, 211.
de la Rey, in favour of retreat, 86; and Magersfontein position, 87.
Ridley, Colonel, 129; loses supply column, 150, 151.
Riet River, French reconnoitres, 139.
Rifles, Boer supplies of, 19; British 30; Mauser, 113.
Roads, 9, 133
Roberts, Lord, and Sir G. Colley, 16; his career, 125; arrives Cape Town, 127; improves organisation, 128; tactical instructions, &c., 130; his objective, 130; concentrates army, 135, 136; deceives Boers, 136; reaches Modder River, 137; plan to relieve Kimberley, 138; ensures secrecy, 138; orders advance, 138; loss of supply column, 152; equal to the occasion, 152; confined to bed, 156; differs from Kitchener, 157; his energy, 171; his plans difficult to criticise correctly, 171; influence of public opinion, 171; manœuvring *v.* fighting, 171–174; cavalry, wrong use of, 172; modern warfare, 172; what he ought to have done, 172; errors of the Boers, 174; pursuit and investment of Cronje admirably managed, 174; secrecy and divisional commanders, 178; sends Kitchener reinforcements, 198; arrives at Paardeberg, 198; breaks off armistice, 198; his plans, 199; orders bombardment, 199; surrender of Cronje, 210; forbids further attacks at Paardeberg, 199, 225; not justified in this, 226; and Kelly-Kenny, 229.
Rodepan, fight near, 139.

Scandinavian Corps, 84; at Magersfontein, 102.
Schalk Burgher succeeds Joubert, 47.
Schofield, Captain, R.A., 67.
Shooter's Hill (Colenso), 60.
Signal Hill (Paardeberg), 162.
Sixth Division, to Naauwpoort, 135; to Modder River camp, 136; reaches Ramdam, 141; Riet River, 143; Modder, 144; does not notice Cronje's retreat, 156; unaware of Cronje's position, 167; overtakes Boers, 167; to blame for Cronje's retreat, 178; at Paardeberg, 182–184; attacked in rear, 187.
Slocum, Captain, American Military Attaché, and Lord Kitchener, 226.
Smokeless Powder, 21, 121, 166, 177.
South Africa described, 4–9.
Springfield (Colenso), 57.
Springfontein junction, 10, 132.
Spytfontein, Boers occupy, 86.
Sterkstroom, 52, 127.
Steyn, President, correspondence with Kruger, 85; his energy, 87.
Stormberg, rail to, 10; action at and probable effect of on Buller, 52; garrisoned, 78; Jatacre occupies, 214.
Strategy, Sir G. White and Sir W. Symons, 32; Boer, 33; British explained. 46; and railways, 80; and mobility of British, 80; and Bloemfontein, 130, 132, 134; rapid concentration, 136; criticism difficult, 171.
Supplies, system improved, 128; required for move on Bloemfontein, 132; capture of Boer, 142; capture of British, 150, 151; others collected, 152; army on half rations, 153; separated from transport, 169; Kimberley depôt, 204.
Symons, General Sir W., strategy of, 32; surprised at Dundee, 33; killed, 34.

Tactics, Boer, 12; influence of on Orientals, 13; Boer in 1881, 17; Boer artillery, 21; faulty British, 23; preference for shock, 24; British old-fashioned, 24; in India, modern, 24; influence of Generals on, 25; British units, 25; infantry in attack, 26, 195, 197, 215–225; in defence, 27, 197, 220; British traditions affect, 28; night attacks, 28; cavalry and mounted infantry, 28, 29; artillery, 29; cavalry at Talana, 34; at Elandslaagte, 34–38; British at Elandslaagte were good, 38; British in Natal, Oct. 30, 1899, 40; and Hlangwane Hill, 50; Colenso plan of attack, 51; Boer artifices, Colenso, 57; British at Colenso, 76; surprises inevitable in war, 76; Hildyard's at Colenso sound, 77; Boer at Colenso, 77; British at Belmont, 81; pursuit impossi-

ble, 81; change in Boer, 82; British at Modder River, 83; frontal attacks, 85; Methuen's, 85; reconnaissance in force (Magersfontein), 92, 93; Methuen's plan of attack, 95; Highlanders at Magersfontein, 97–105; Guards, 106; isolated British attacks, 103, 116, 121; cavalry, 103, 104, 118; artillery, 104, 107, 109, 118; opportunity lost, 105; Gordons reinforce, 107–109; Highland Brigade retires, 108, 109; Methuen's criticised, 111, 112, 114, 116; unsupported frontal attack, 117; mounted infantry, 118; British leadership criticised, 119; lessons of Magersfontein, 121; and smokeless powder, 121, 166, 177, 206; of cavalry division, 140, 142; relief of Kimberley, 145–147; great cavalry charge, 146; cavalry *v.* infantry, 147, 177; cavalry in attack, 159; remarkable achievement of dismounted cavalry, 165; cavalry on Feb. 16 and 17, 1900, 166; valuable lessons, 166; criticism difficult, 171; manœuvring *v.* fighting, 172–174; 6th Division at Paardeberg, 182–184; Highland Brigade, *id.*, 185, 186; de Wet appears, 187; his grave error, 226; 19th Brigade at Paardeberg, 189–192, 208, 209; Kitchener orders assault, 190; his error, 191; charge of mounted infantry, 194; 18th Brigade, 194–196; artillery bombardment, 199, 201, 202, 227; French recaptures Kitchener's Kopje, 203; infantry use spades, 223; Boers fail to retake Kitchener's Kopje, 205, 206; result of guerilla warfare, 211; Kitchener at Paardeberg criticised, 215–218; faulty British, 220; continually changed, 219; lessons of, 221–224; artillery error, 220; British dash, 222; Nitral's Nek, 224.

Talana Hill, Boers driven from, 33.

Telegraphs, field (Boer), 22; field (British), 31, 143.

Theatre of war, described, 5–11; at Colenso, 49, 50; near Kimberley, 79; Magersfontein, 87; influence on tactics, 132; and water supply, 134; pursuit of Cronje, 161, 162; Paardeberg, 179.

Training, military, faulty British, 23–25; 27–29, 121, 191, 218; in India, 24, 29, 218.

Transport, size of British, 79; reorganised, 128; required for move on Bloemfontein, 132; capture of British, 150, 151; new collected, 152; separated from supply, 169.

Transvaal, The, area, 5; annexed in 1877, 14; effect of this, 14; independence proclaimed, 14; prepares for war, 18; men available and armament, 19–21.

Tucker, General, reaches Riet River, 140; and supply column, 150, 151.

Tugela River, 10; country near, 49, 50.

Ultimatum of Transvaal, 4; time limit expires, 33.

Vaalkranz, 58.

Vaal River, 8.

Van Reenen's Pass, 11.

Viljoen, B., 19.

Voetpad's Drift, 92; Yorkshire Light Infantry at, 107.

War, customs of, observance of, 211, 212.

War Office, British, and Boers, 11; Intelligence Division, 18; neglects experience, 23; its good points, 23; difficulties of, 24.

Wars, Colonial, difficulties of, 23; prejudicial effects of, 24, 25, 114; artillery in Sudan, 29.

Water supply, influence of, 91, 134, 188; affects Cronje's retreat, 155; Boers destroy, 159.

Waterval Drift, de Wet at, 140.

Wauchope, General, 97, 100; a true hero, 101, 102; death of, 102.

Weenen (Colenso), 57; signalling station at, 70, 74.

de Wet, General Ch., at Waterval Drift, 140; advice to Cronje, 154, 200; captures Kitchener's Kopje, 187; Vloriman joins, 202; 2,000 men, 202; evacuates Kitchener's Kopje, 203; attempts its recapture, 205, 206; on Cronje's surrender, 213; grave errors of, 226, 227.

White, General Sir G., goes to Natal, 2; arrives Durban, 32; his force, 32; his strategy, 32; concentrates his force, 39; difficult position of, 39; defeated on Oct. 30, 1899, 40; message from Buller, 70; inaction explained, 74; relieved by Buller, 214.
Winter Hoek, 140.
Wolseley, Viscount, advice neglected, 3; on manœuvres, 25.
Wolves Kraal Drift, Cronje reaches, 161; surprised at, 162.
Wylie Fort, bombarded, 52; on Dec. 15, 1899, 61, 65.

Yule, General, succeeds Symons, 34; decides to retreat, 38; reaches Ladysmith, 39.

Zulus, defeated by Boers, 12; change of habits, 13; war with, 14.



Printed by Jas. Truscott & Son, Ltd., London, E.C.



Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 31 October, 2019